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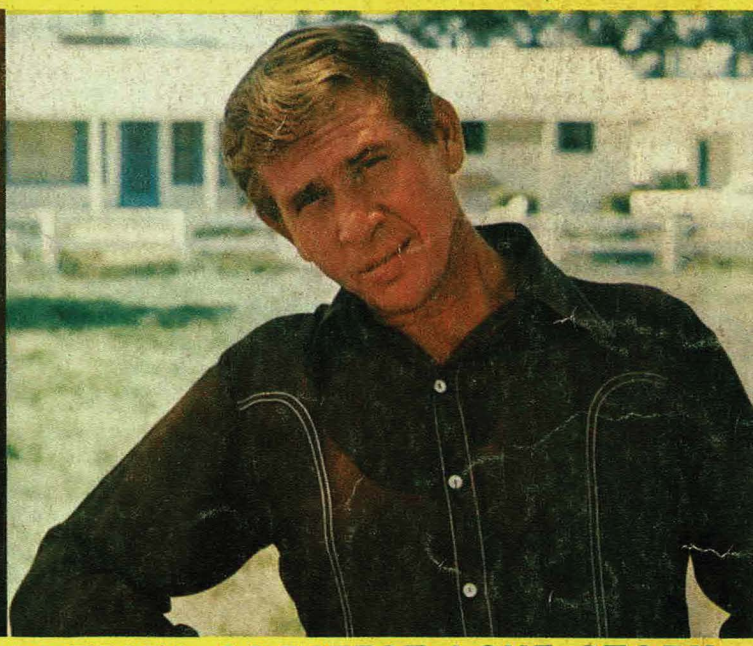

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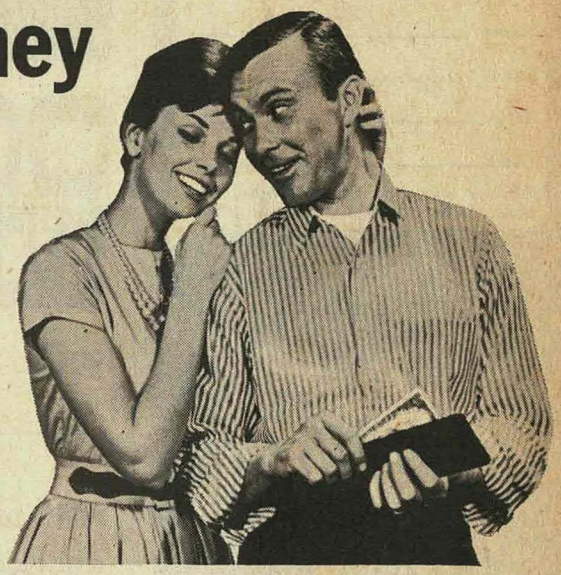

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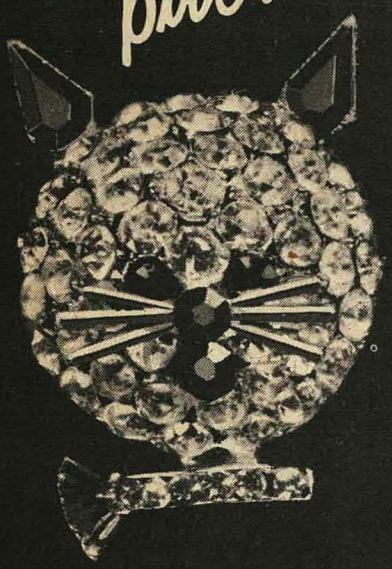

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VOL. 1, NO. 1 APRIL, 1970

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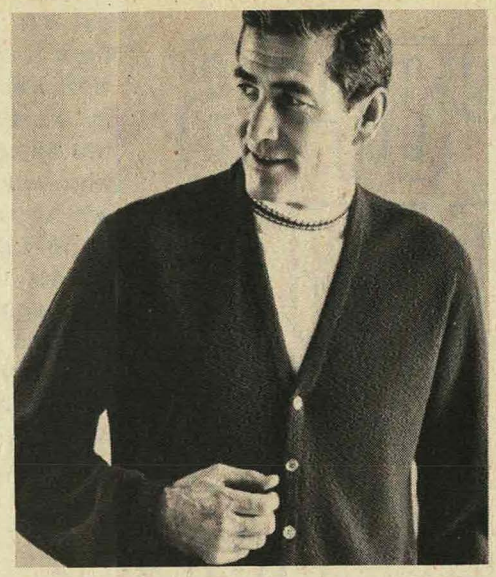

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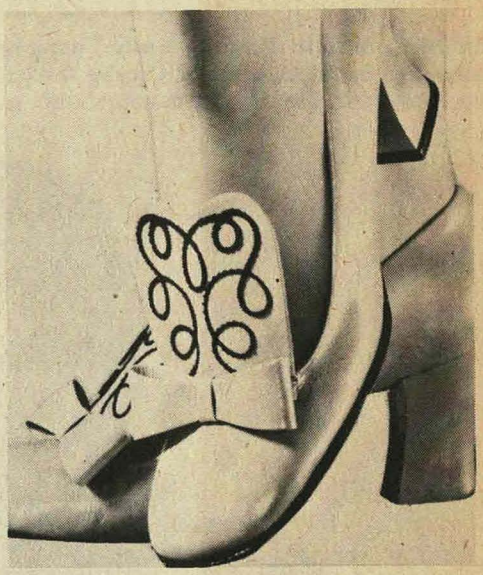

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POP'S DEBT TO NASHVILLE

Along Sunset Strip and St. Mark's place, the crazily-paisley shirts have given way to fringed buckskin jackets, sandals have been replaced by extravagantly-stitched western boots, and the kids now walk the streets with a back-in-the-saddle kind of swagger instead of the dreamy psychedelic slouch of a year ago.

And from the open windows comes the voice of Hank Williams or Merle Haggard or Johnny Cash.

The world of pop has gone country, Nashville has come to the street people, and American mainstream music will never be quite the same again. The alumni from the most recent generation of rock musicians have regrouped—literally!—and are staging a new assault on the record charts. This time, instead of starting out with the sounds of soul, they have turned to the sounds of Nashville, Memphis, and Bakersfield. And in a million rumpus rooms and two-car garages, the kids of today who will be the stars of tomorrow are starring, not rock groups, but country groups.

What has been called the Bakersfield sound has a lot to do with it. Chris Hillman, of the Flying Burrito Brothers, says that Merle Haggard and his west coast confreres have "a lot sharper edge to it than Nashville."

(Continued on page 37)

The Poco. Richard Furay & Rusty Young were formerly with the Buffalo Springfield. (Steve Stills & Neil Young, the remaining Buffaloes are now Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young.) Always country's been seeping into pop, but now with the Poco, this blending of country with pop is unmistakable. As a matter of fact, all music seems to be blending.

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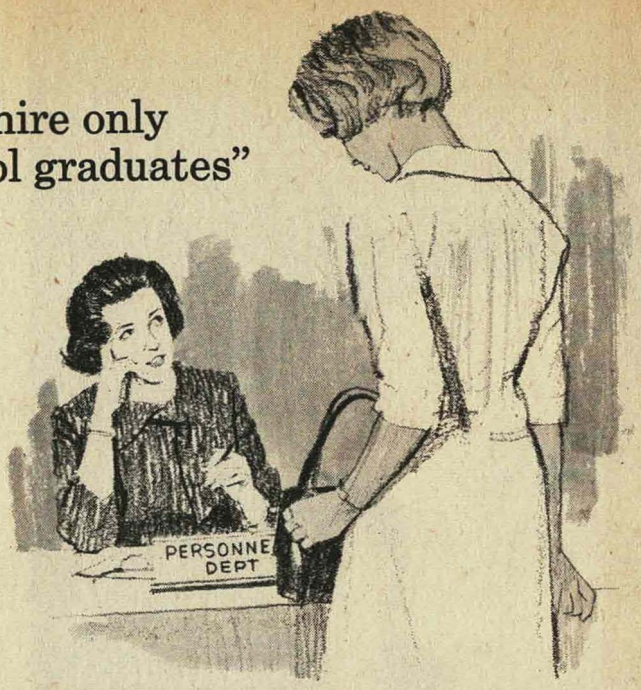

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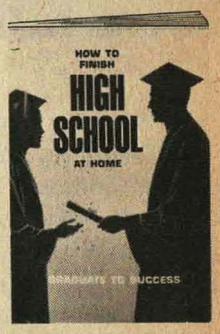

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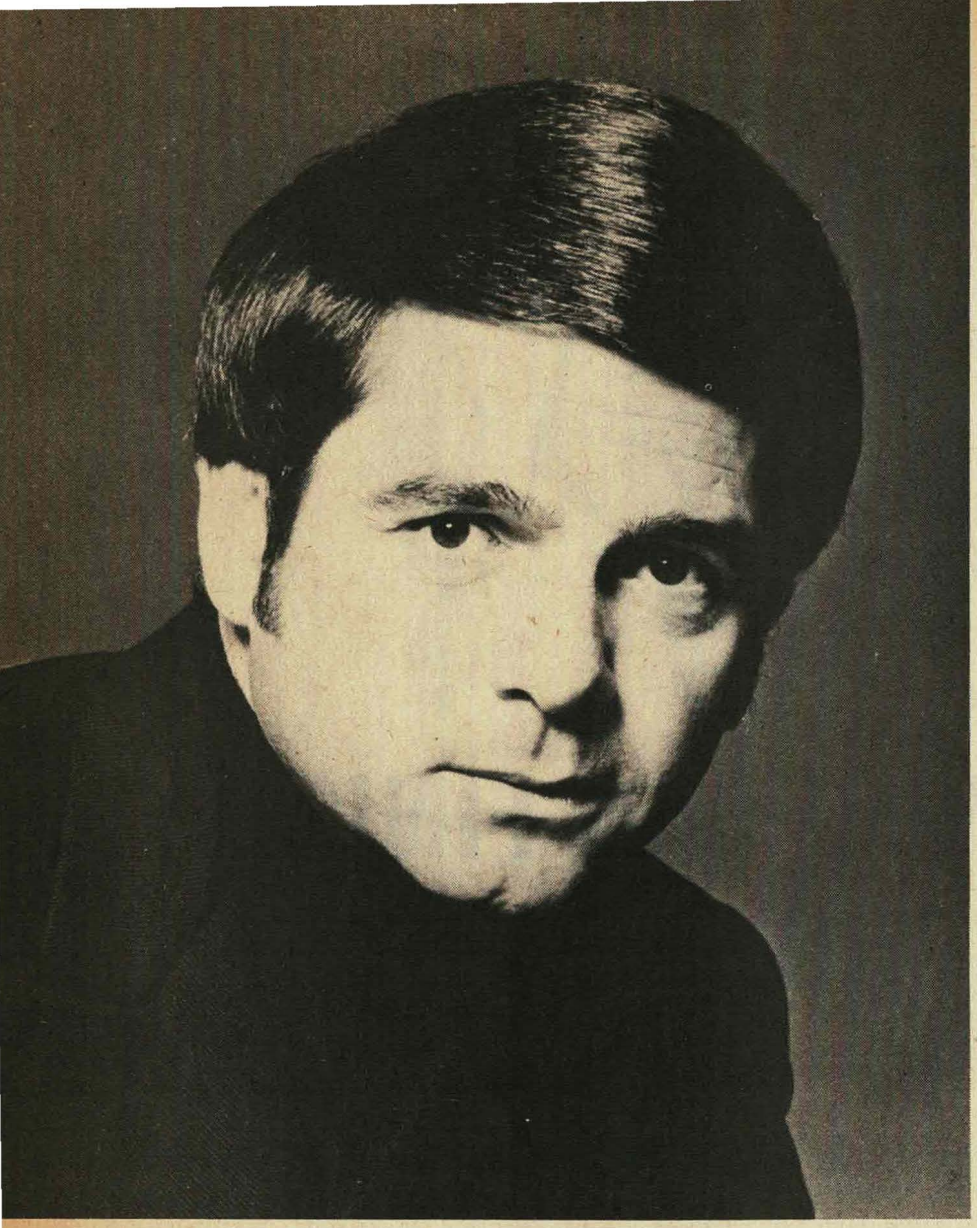

UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY:

AL De LORY The Man Who Made Glen Campbell

Al DeLory was the greatest help of all, says Glen, whose show is BIG.

Cast your ears and your minds back to the state of America's pop music market at the moment when Glen Campbell breezed onto the charts with **Gentle On My Mind.** Late in 1967, it was, when the tremendous initial momentum of the British rock invasion had pretty well spent itself, when people were still wondering whether **Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band** was a masterpiece or a colossal blunder, and the mighty Rolling Stones appeared to be on the brink of final disaster and dissolution. Fans were beginning to snap to the fact that not every high-flying psychedelic group from San Francisco was a musical revelation. Folk music was a dead issue, so far as pop was concerned, people were wondering what had happened to Dylan, and it seemed unlikely that anyone would ever record with an acoustic guitar again. Procol Harum's monumental "A Whiter Shade of Pale" had blazed briefly and brilliantly, but without the follow-up hit the group desperately needed, the promise of "Bach-rock" went unfulfilled.

Clearly, a fresh new sound was needed. And after the rich complexities and mindstretching originality we had been hearing, the sound we hankered for had to be simple, melodious, and sincere, yet satisfying to our awakened musical instincts.

Al De Lory, one of Capitol Records most able and respected record producers, was well aware of this state of the American musical public. Pianist, composer, arranger, conductor, and A & R man in his own career, he has also been a wise and helpful guide to many major artists over the years. With experience like his, you learn to listen to the sounds of your time, and to project into the future the course those sounds will take.

For some time, DeLory had been working with Glen Campbell. Glen was in a peculiar position, at the time. He had had a *(Continued on page 38).*

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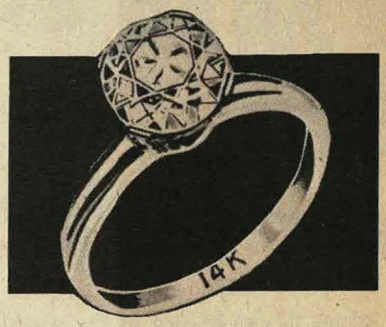

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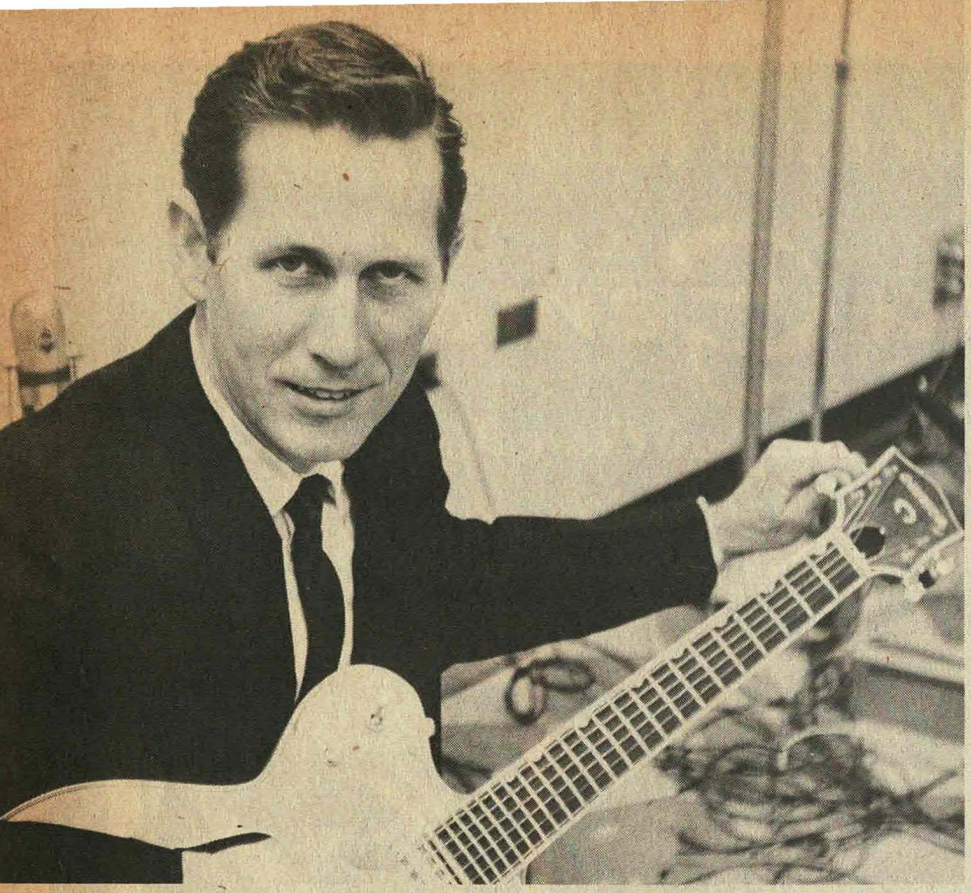

When musicians get to complaining about the recording industry, one of their big complaints is often that the men in charge seem so often to be businessmen, out of touch with the music market and, even more important, out of touch with music itself. Though it's a serious overstatement, it has some basis in fact. The record business is, after all, a business, and in order for there to be recording sessions, there have to be buyers to purchase the records, and a means of distribution and manufacturing to put these records in their hands. And just as there have to be musicians, arrangers, and producers to create the music, there must also be record businessmen to turn that music into records, see that they are packaged properly, promoted wisely, and sold effectively.

However, men who are good at this sort of thing are not necessarily the ones most interested in the product they're selling. Some of them might be just as happy and just as effective selling iron and steel scrap, or lingerie, or frozen food. Not everybody in the music business is a dedicated musician.

This is why *(Continued on page 42)*

Chet Atkins is well-known as the world's leading guitarist. RCA has no idea how many singles he's cut there.

THE DOUBLE LIFE OF CHET ATKINS

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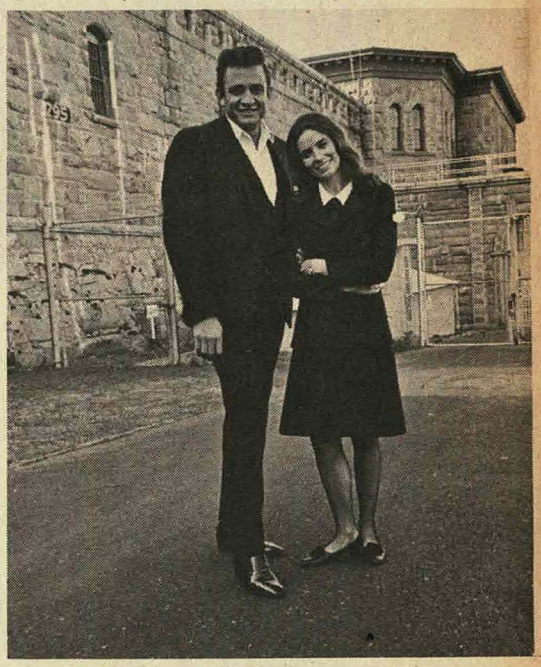
R&B and Pop artists are making hits out of many Nashville-penned songs, which are Country oriented and recorded in an upbeat manner. The **Glen Campbell's, Johnny Cash's, Roy Clark's, Buck Owen's** and many others are now television stars while Nashville is fast becoming a TV production center with **The Johnny Cash Show** and **Hee Haw** being filmed within its confines—not to mention numerous TV syndicates and several major flicks.

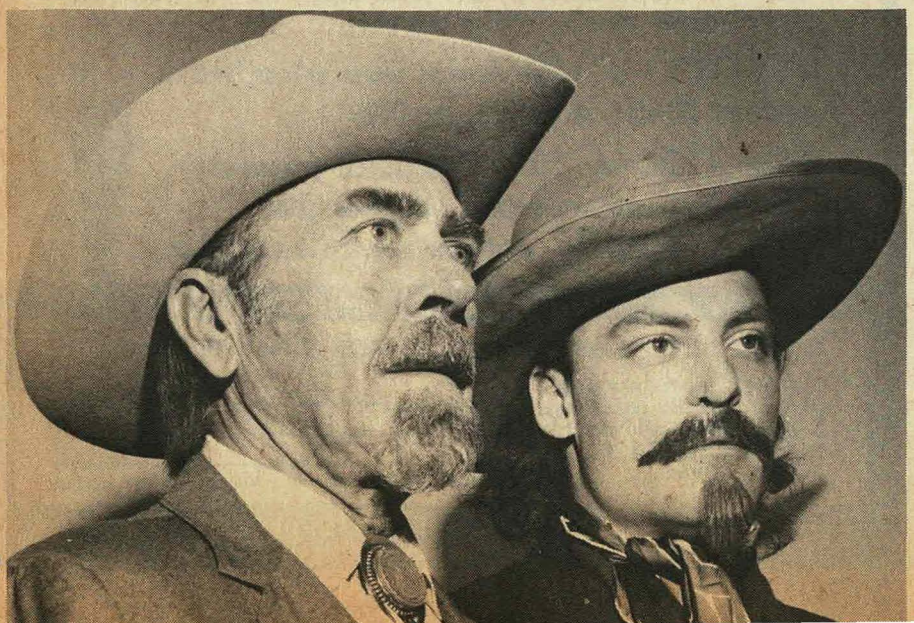
We'll try each issue to keep you abreast of the happenings in Music City, USA. It's a 'swingin' town and believe me, it's only beginning to happen. Now, on to some facts, gossip and—we hope—a chuckle or two.

Hee Haw's brunette and pretty **Dianna Scott** who formerly played a student nurse on the **General Hospital** daytimer, is in reality a registered nurse. Her pulse-taking days in Boston preceded her pulsating career in acting where she's raising quite a few blood pressures these days.

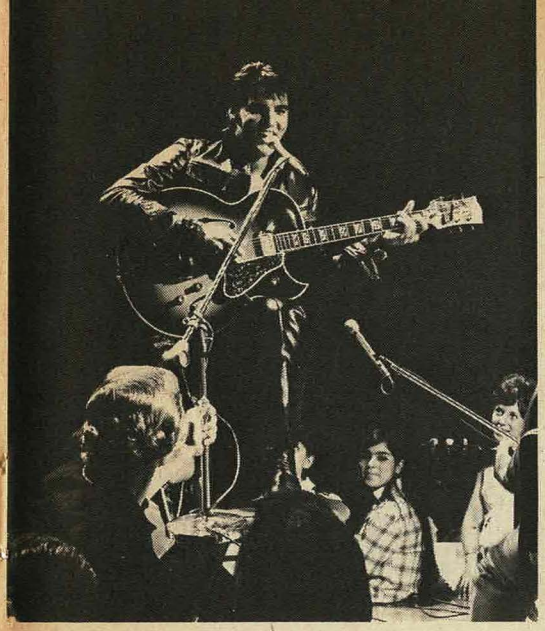
Cincinnati's **Country Hayride** has donned host **Henson Cargill's** name. Henson, a quick witted, sharply dressed cat who does his recording bit in Nashville, is one of the select C&W artists



Johnny Cash entertaining at a prison. Cons say his concerts help.



Maybe the play, Indians, no matter how brief its run, will keep us remembering. Shown: B. Cody, S. Keach.



The immortal Elvis—he was thought to be 1st R&R man, really was C&W.

under the Super know-how management of **Jim Halsey.** Halsey recently took Nashville-based **Hee Haw** regulars and Grand Ole Opry stars **Archie Campbell** and **Grandpa Jones** into his fold, where they joined Halsey's other hitmakers, **Roy Clark, Hank Thompson, Ferlin Husky, Wanda Jackson, Mary Taylor** and **Minnie Pearl.**

Jack "I Want One" Reno spends part of the wintry month of January making things warmer for Far East fans during his Tokyo, Vietnam, Okinawa, and Saipan tour.

Hee Haw's funny fatman—**Junior Samples**—warped their minds on his initial trip to glitter-spangled Hollywood. Seems he couldn't get over all "them boy waitresses" he saw in the restaurants. Junior has to be seen in the flesh—which adds up to 300 pounds of it in his case—to really appreciate him. You can't believe he's for real until you see him and then you'll suffer with sides aching from laughter for days afterward.

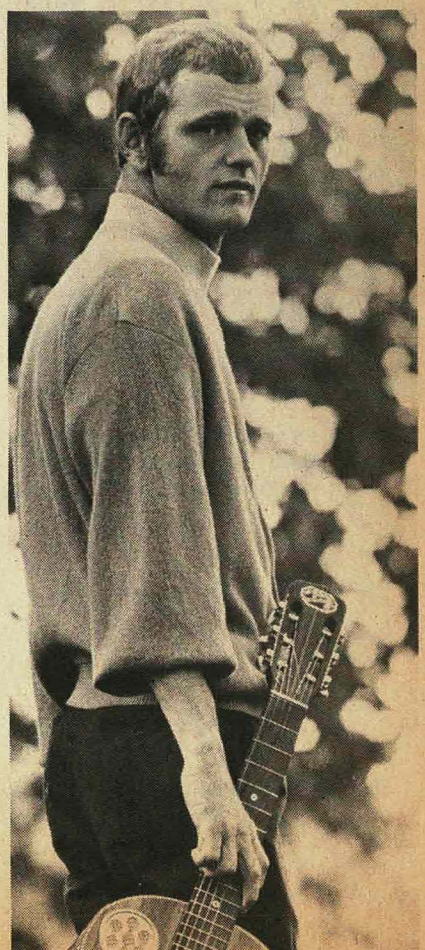
RUMOR OF THE MONTH: What C&W hitmaker is supposedly playing house to the lake-side tune of one and one make three????

Shelby S. Singleton Jr. purchased a plantation on the Nashville fringe. The 30-room house is reportedly 113 years old. Used as a hospital during the Civil War, the under-renovation house still sports blood spattered walls in the basement.

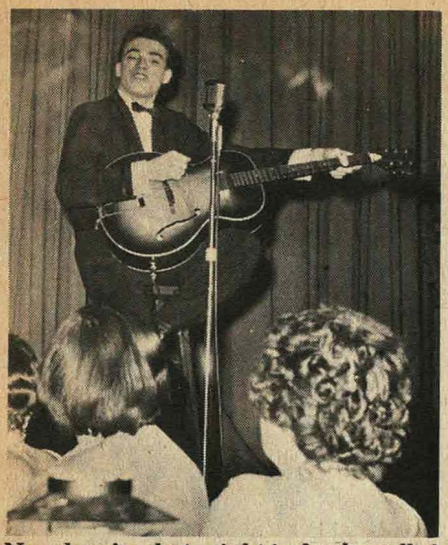
Plantation is a hitmaking sound in Shelby's ears. He quit a $75,000 a year job as a Mercury Record V. P. two-and-a-half years ago and went independent on a $1,000 capitalization. Several hits and label foundings later—including the recording and releasing of **Jeannie C. Riley's** "Harper Valley P.T.A." as the first record on his Plantation label—he recently turned down $30 million for

Like Jeannie Riley, Dolly Parton dresses up the scene. Just look!

Like Elvis, RCA's Jerry Reed let R&R get lost; went with "country."



Johnny Cash was always a man of the people; concerts prove it.



Now here's what might in fun be called a misnomer, Jimmie Rodgers. His namesake died 30 years ago, Feb.

Maybe you know Trigger (a horse) better than Roy Rogers and Dale—but now, listen to their C&W blend.

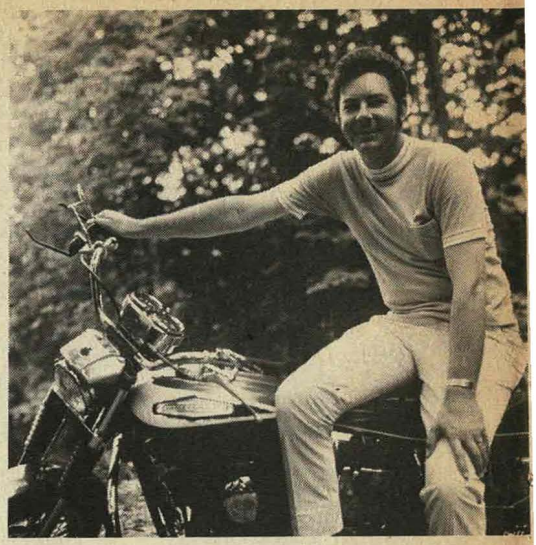
his Nashville-based complex.

Another C&W artist seems to think Plantation is lucky. Good looking **Pay Pillow** inked with Singleton's Plantation label and bought himself a plantation the same day. Ii must have worked. His records have been chart climbers ever since.

Pert and vivacious **Peggy Little** was really bouncing when she learned no maligancy was discovered following her round of surgery. Her fans were equally glad because anyone who belts a song to hitsville like **Peggy** did—and does—with ones like "Son Of A Preacher Man," "Sweet Baby Girl" and "Put Your Lovin' Where Your Mouth Is"—has just got to go on singing and singing

Jerry Kennedy—Nashville guitar maestro who's responsible for so much of the unique guitar sounds on Nashville—cut records (the dobro runs on **Jeannie C. Riley's** "Harper Valley P. T. A." for instance) has been named Mercury's VP in charge of A&R at Nashville.

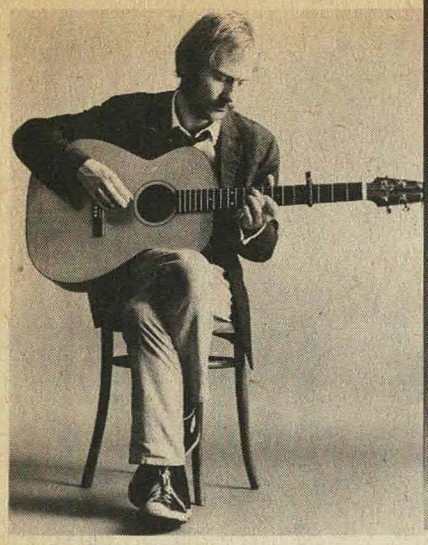
Johnny Cash—who's being nicknamed "God" around Music City, U.S.A.—plays history's Indian advocate John Ross in the April 2 slated airing of the National Educational Television drama about President Andrew Jackson—entitled "The Trail of Tears." Cash reportedly turned down six major movie offers before accepting the Nashville-filmed role opposite he-man actor **Jack Palance** Cash revealed the Ross role, as well as the script tt eme, appealed to his Cherokee blood During the shooting of Andrew Jackson's historically preserved "Hermitage" near Nashville, director **Lane Slate**



Stuckney is known for keeping his cool, whether on stage or his 'cycle.

Following the glamour lead of Jean Riley, Dottie West came to town . . .

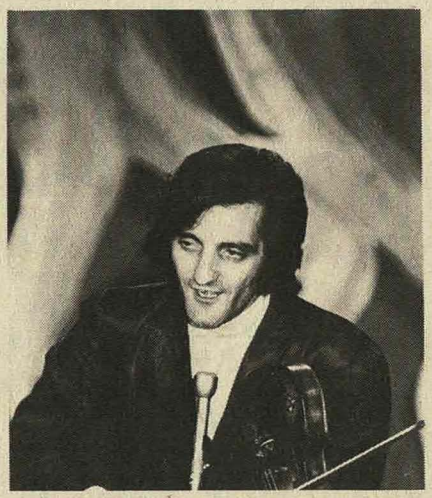
Woody's son's way-out marriage to Jackie Hyde. Best wedding yet!!!



Roy Harper & D. Gibson are two of the best men on strings in the field.

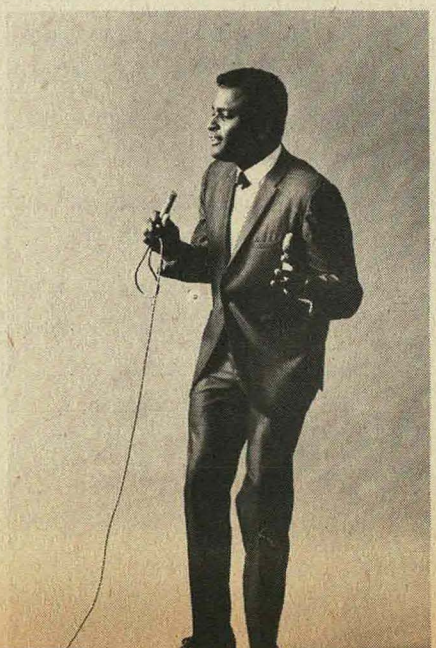
Linda, who often appears on J. Cash shows, was once with Stone Poneys . .

Piano is seldom used in country music, too heavy to cart; but, for the exception that makes rule, F. Cramer.



Doug Kershaw is about the fiercest of fiddle players from Louisiana.

Virtually the only Negro to break into "country"—Charlie Pride . . .



classified Cash as "a strong actor with the same kind of power as **John Wayne.**"

Jimmy Dean reportedly bought a $100,000 home in Greenwich, Conn., and will make it his residence when he isn't TV filming in California, recording in Nashville or operating his sausage plant in Texas.

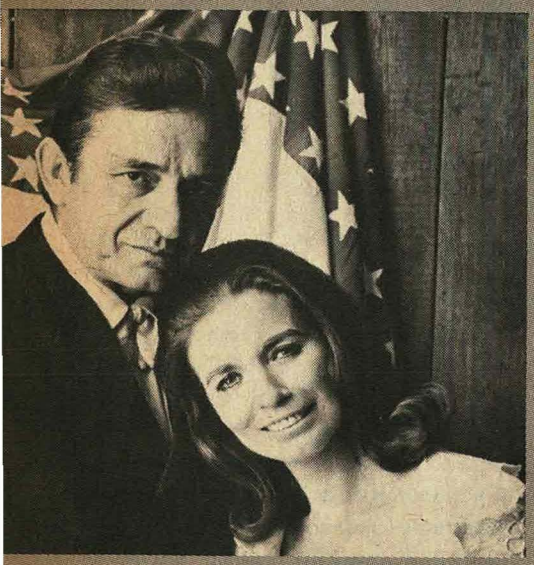
Astronaut **Charles (Pete) Conrad** failed to give friend **Faron Young** a requested universal plug during his historic stroll on the moon during the Apollo 12 mission. Pete and Faron have been friends a long time and the astronaut told Faron he was planning on taking some of the singer's tapes along on the mission so he "could play them for the folks out there in Spaceland." Faron, in turn, asked Pete to mention his latest Mercury recording while strolling around the moon. Wonder what Federal Communications would have thought about that?

Speaking of the space program **Werner Von Braun,** director of the George Marshall Spaceflight Center at Huntsville, Ala., used Nashville's RCA studios to record commentary for a documentary film about man's walk on the moon—reportedly sponsored by the Defense Dept. and slated for release "sometime after the first of the year."

Fred Ordway, who directed the "Space Odyssey: 2001" movie, and **Betty McMillen,** local advertising specialist, co-produced the three-hour session.

That's it for now. See you next issue.

JOHNNY CASH & JUNE CARTER: COUNTRY'S GREATEST LOVE STORY



June Carter would be the first to deny her part in "saving" Johnny.

Probably June Carter Cash would be the first to deny it, if you said that she was responsible for the immense superstardom of her husband, Johnny. She'd say that he did it all himself, that she knew all the time he could, and that she's not surprised at all.

But Johnny's closest friend told a reporter recently, "John has a miracle pulling for him—and that's June Carter." And there are a lot of people, in Nashville and around the world, who would agree. Among them, Johnny Cash himself.

Now Johnny is reluctant to talk much about those days when he was strung out on pills, when his first marriage was falling apart, when associates in the music business feared that he might be headed for the same kind of tragic death that Hank Williams had met a decade

Musically and professionally Johnny has never been anything but "on top," but his personal life wasn't always the same. "People—his best friends—kept dying," a pal says, summing it up, "and at one point, Johnny had just about given it all up." At that point, June stepped in.

The Cashes can't begin to count the number of times they've given concerts at prisons, such as Folsom. Inmates dig 'em.

before. There are things a man doesn't like to discuss, even though he has to live with them himself, the rest of his life.

"I have never been all the way down and out," he insists. "I've been down physically and mentally at times, so I understand what it's like to feel like an underdog. Every good songwriter I know struggled and lived through hard times."

But he won't go into the details. He knows them too well. And he has to live with the horrifying gaps in his memory, like the time he awoke in the Georgia jail, not knowing how he got there. A friendly policeman had found him wandering the streets, recognized him, and brought him to the cooler to sleep it off. Cash wasn't booked, but the experience had a sobering, frightening effect.

The funny thing is that Cash

The Cash show was so big as a summer replacement that ABC put on a few Specials, then put it on in '70.

doesn't have to talk about it. Everything anyone needs to know is right there, for those who care to look. On Johnny's face are etched the lines of pain and loss and irremediable mistakes. In his gaze is the calm strength of a man who has looked himself in the eye at his lowest ebb, and has come to terms with the demons inside his soul.

Audiences sense immediately the kind of man that Johnny Cash is, and what he has gone through. The thousands of men he has entertained in his numerous prison concerts have picked up on it right away. Losers and underdogs themselves, they sense that Johnny is in many ways one of their own. His struggles and hard times have matched theirs, and but for a few turns of luck, it might be any one of them up there onstage with the big guitar, and John Cash sitting in prison clothes on a dining hall bench.

And when sunny, pretty June Carter comes out to join her rangy husband in one of their great duets, anyone who has ever loved or been loved can tell what's going on up there. It may look like they're singing, but those two are really making love. Big Johnny's craggy face is radiant with love as he looks down at the blonde, petite June; impish smiles and mock-anger chase each other across her face as she mugs through the lyrics, but behind each expression is a look of calm, abiding love.

And to *(Continued on page 51)*

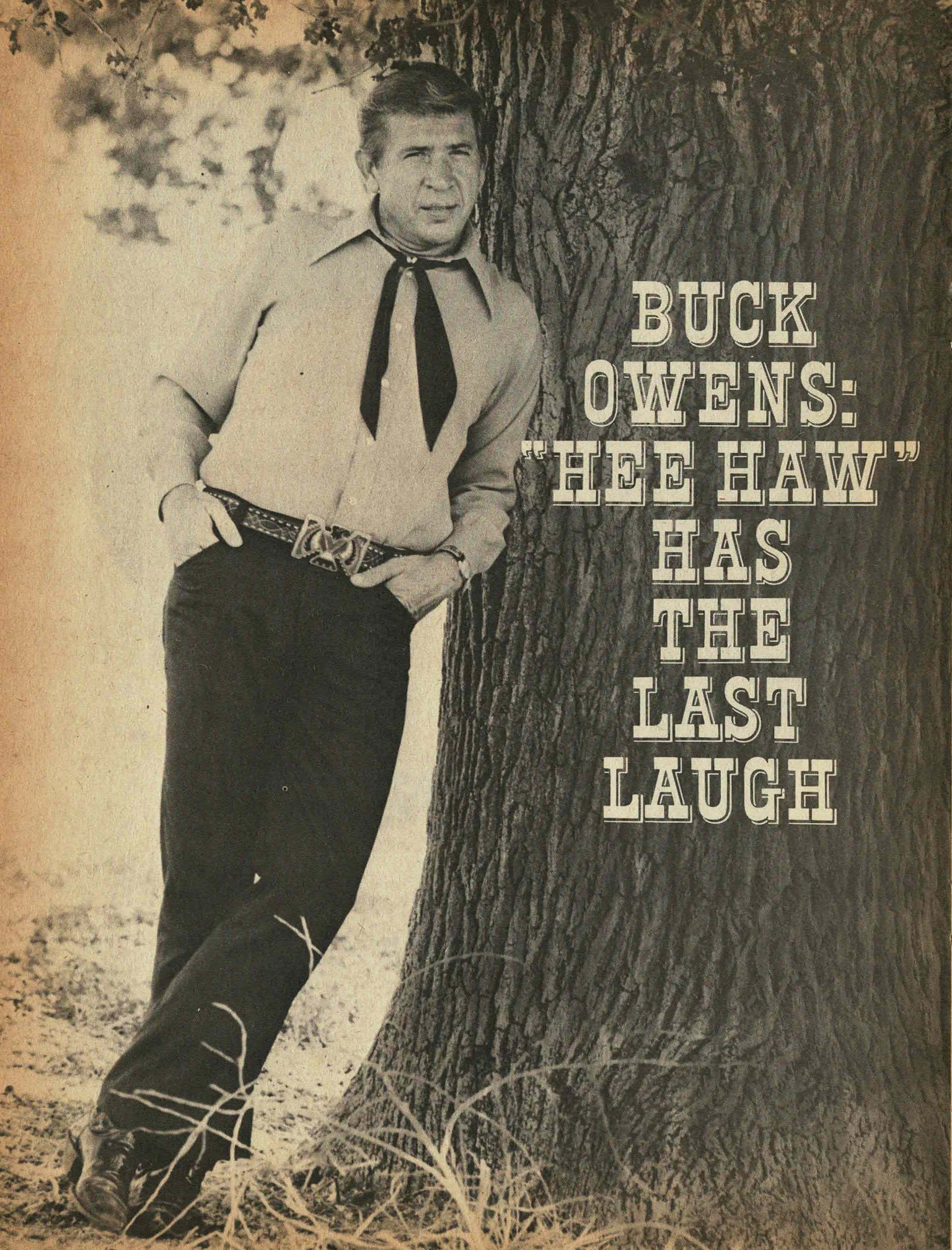
The Cashes welcome such talent as Charlie Callas. And soon they'll welcome their first family addition.

KITTY WELLS:

EVERYBODY'S HONKY-TONK ANGEL

In the world of music, where pop stars emerge, flourish briefly and retire into anonymity, and where groups get together, make a few records, and go their seperate ways, there are a few things which remain constant over a period of years. Country music, country fans, and country artists don't change much, not even after almost twenty years. And perhaps the finest example is sweet Kitty Wells.

Back in 1952, Kitty recorded her first record, "It wasn't God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels," and since that time, not too much has changed. She's still working for Decca, she still sings the song, and that song is still the one that fans most closely associate with her. Even *(Continued on page 58)*



BUCK OWENS: "HEE HAW" HAS THE LAST LAUGH

As if Spiro Agnew's complaints about their news departments weren't enough, the television fraternity has another reminder that the borders of the U.S.A. do not coincide with the outer limits of suburbia. There's a whole lot of people out there to whom "sophisticated" is a questionable virtue and who never heard of Putney Swope. The people that wear crew cuts and think grass is something for horses to eat. The people that watch television and determine the television ratings have brought back *Hee-Haw.*

For those of you who were in Acapulco or the Greek Islands for the summer, *Hee-Haw* was a television stepchild, a summer replacement show to fill in the embarrassing gap between last spring's *Smothers Brothers Show,* and this fall's much-touted *Leslie Uggams Show.* It wasn't the sort of show the network bigwigs liked to boast about because, for one thing, it just wasn't designed to suit sophisticated audiences. What's more, it poked fun at some of the audiences' most sacred cows, including network commentators! Imagine the chagrin of the intellectual lads in that nice modern building on Sixth Avenue, when the ratings began to come in, showing *Hee-Haw* a real winner. Not only was it a put-down of the intellectual approach to television programming—it was a thorn in the side of the network sales department, for the new fall schedule simply had no room in which to continue this surprise hit.

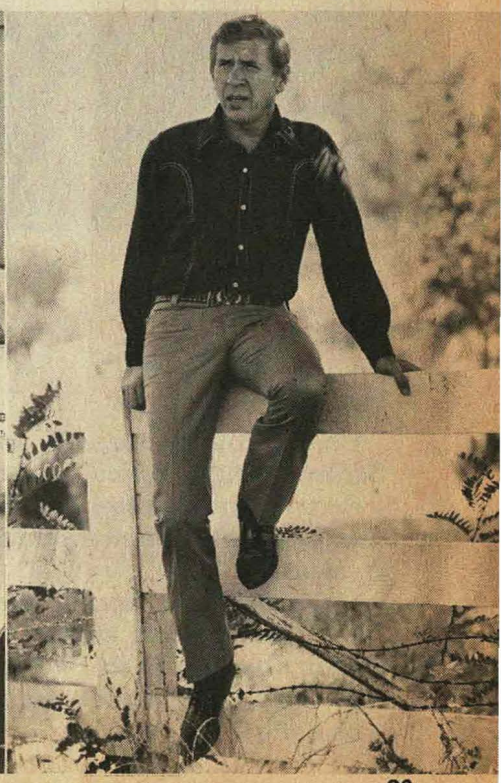
Hee-Haw got the last laugh when despite the genuine talents of singer Leslie Uggams, her show turned out to be a total disaster, panned by the critics and tuned out by the viewers. The demise of the *Leslie Uggams Show* that replaced *Hee-Haw* enabled CBS to put the country show *(Continued on page 46)*

Buck Owens and his Buckaroos were part of what helped put Hee Haw over—much to the surprise of top brass who thought it was too corny to be a hit.

On the opposite page, Buck leans against a cottonwood tree, symbol of the country life he so enjoys—and of the music he gives city people to enjoy . . .

Roy Clark, fantastic instrumentalist, often appears on country shows.

Buck has been around with his Bakersfield brand of music since the year 1.



SALUTE TO WSM &

Can a country funeral and an 80-year-old fiddler change musical history? And transform a sleepy Tennessee town into Music City, U.S.A.? And make a single radio station famous around the world?

Unlikely as it seems, that's the way that WSM, the nation's number one country music station, happened to give birth to The Grand Ole Opry, the world's number one country music show.

It all began when George D. Hay, then a reporter for the *Memphis Commercial Appeal,* was sent to cover the funeral of a World War I hero in the foothills of the Ozarks near Mammoth Springs, Ark. After the rites were finished, the funeral party cut loose with a "hoedown" in a log cabin, "lighted by a kerosene lamp," as Hay recalled.

"No one has ever had more fun than those Ozark mountaineers had that night," his account

With radio, the Willburns came out of one living room to go to homes all over nation. "Opry" was a "first."

George D. Hay started "Opry," featuring such stars as Bill Monroe, who was the father of blue-grass style.

George Day, the "solemn old judge," was a reporter in Nashville before seeing the possibilities of the "Opry."

Cousin Minnie Pearl, in her "storebought" hat is often seen on "Hee Haw." She, too, started on "Opry."

"THE GRAND OLE OPRY"

continues. "It stuck with me until the idea became the Grand Ole Opry seven or eight years later."

On October 5, 1925, the National Life and Accident Insurance Co. opened its Nashville radio station, WSM, and on November 28 of the same year, George D. Hay went on the air to present a radio version of the Ozark hoedown. The star of the impromptu show was the octogenerian Uncle Jimmy Thompson, who played an old-timey fiddle and declared not only that he knew a thousand tunes, but he could also fiddle "the bugs off a sweet 'tater vine!" Whatever effect the hour-long show may have had on the 'tater bugs of the region is not known—however, the listeners responded enthusiastically and something like a migration began.

From the entire Southern mountain area, it seemed, every picker, singer, fiddler, strummer,

Hawkshaw Hawkins was killed in air crash with other country greats . . .

Loretta Lynn owes much to "Opry" and to WSM, the Voice of Nashville...

Little Jimmy Dickens, also of WSM fame. All photos are from station.

yodeler and jug-blower packed up his instrument and set out for Nashville in hopes of appearing on Hay's show. There were the Possum Hunters, from Estill Springs, Tenn., led by Dr. Humphrey Bate. And the Fruit Jar Drinkers, the Gully Jumpers, and the Crook Brothers.

The show began to develop a personality of its own. Hay assumed the character of the Solemn Ole Judge, with floppy bow tie, broad-brimmed black hat, and the pompous airs of a clown let loose in a courthouse. In 1926, Uncle Dave Macon, the first real singing star of the show, began his 15-year reign. Deford Bailey, a Negro harmonica player, still active today, was a regular. The show, which had come to be called The Barn Dance, had grown to a three-hour format and was easily the most popular radio show in the south at the time.

One night the show followed a Music

DJ Marty Robbins, probably America's #1 fan of country sound. Hawkshaw's plane crashed near his house.

The Willis Brothers, another renowned "family" team. Families are close in the country, so are groups . . .

Appreciation Hour, led by the eminent musicologist Dr. Walter Damrosch. "Judge" Hay opened the ensuing country music show by saying, "For the past hour, we have been listening to music taken largely from Grand Opera, but from now on, we will present 'The Grand Ole Opry.'" The name stuck.

Of course, there was a constant demand from fans to be allowed to watch the show in the studio, and the crowds grew large enough to inspire WSM to build a new auditorium-type studio, seating 500. This was thought excessively large when construction began, but by the time the hall was finished, it could hold only part of the throng that lined up for admission for each performance. The show changed locale constantly, shifting each time to larger quarters but never finding a home big enough for all those who wanted to attend. Its present home, Ryman Auditorium, seats more than 4000, and was bought by the Opry as a permanent home in 1963. But the fans are still too numerous. They wait in lines four and five blocks *(Continued on page 44)*

Fannie Flagg "sings" on all the country shows. You'll remember her from the days of Funt's "Candid Camera" show.

Grandpa Jones is a fantastic banjo and harmonica player—he also dances and is a leading humorist; now on "Hee Haw."

Ernest Tubb & his Texas Troubadours. Tubb was heir to Jimmie Rodgers tradition, was given Rodgers guitar by Carrie.

Hall of Fame:

Jimmie, the father of the true country music, was a railroad man for 14 years. He died of "railroad t.b."

The Singing Brakeman.

JIMMIE RODGERS
The Singing Brakeman

Many voices, many hearts and souls have contributed to the vast rich treasury of American country music. We all know some of the great names—Jimmie Rodgers, Hank Williams, Johnny Cash, and the others. No one can ever add up all the other names, the anonymous voices of humble people who made their own quiet contributions. This is folk music, in the best and truest sense of the word, for it has sprung from the collective heart of a great segment of the American people. The major artists and songwriters had their own God-given gifts to work with, and yet they all owe something to the wide heritage that unknown men and women helped to build, in the country churches, on the farms, beside the cradles of generations of children.

Country artists are quick to acknowledge this debt. With few exceptions they are eager to give credit where it's due, admitting cheerfully that they "borrowed" this verse or that melody from someone else. Thus, many country songs remind us of other country songs. It's very different from the fiercely competitive commercial music scene of New York or Hollywood, where artists and songwriters arrogantly try to prove how new and original they are. In country music, there is a sense of the past and an atmosphere of friendly sharing, and today's great stars are the first to call attention to the achievements of the early creators in the country field.

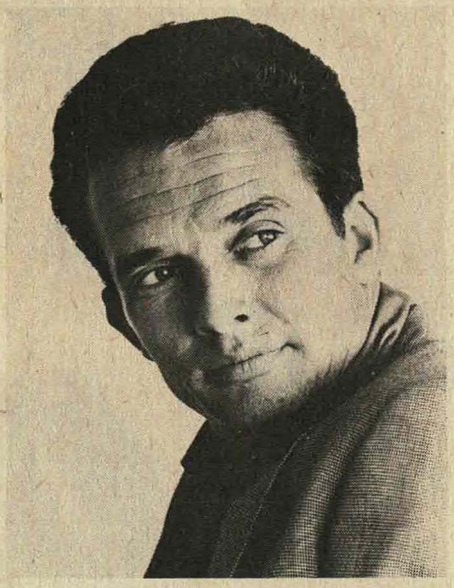
With few exceptions, they all acknowledge the great influence of Jimmie Rogers, the legendary "Singing Brakeman" from Meridian, Miss. Some are

(Continued on page 40)

Knowing he was a dying man, Jimmie came to New York and insisted on a last recording session with RCA. They set up a cot, kept a nurse on hand—and Jimmie did it.

by Al Aronowitz

MERLE HAGGARD: Singing Brakeman of the 60's and 70's



Merle is called the new "singing brakeman," with reference to his reverence for Rodgers.

Country music is blowing in like a fresh wind from the west. America can't be defined by its pay-toilets and its smog. Merle Haggard never heard of Woody Guthrie, but they're both going to be heroes in the plagued remnants of this murderous decade. Merle Haggard's father was one of those Okies that Woody Guthrie used to sing about. Merle Haggard is a gentleman of the cowboy ethic. When he was 14, he was thrown into jail on suspicion of armed robbery. Merle Haggard is a name out of a morality play. That's the kind of songs he sings.

Country people come to the city for excitement. Just to live in the city is enough to drive people to the country for a rest. Westerns are still the peanut butter and jelly of America's cultural diet, and even the Underground, like marijuana, has its roots in the soil. Neal Cassady was a Denver cowboy before he became the hero of Jack Kerouac's *On The Road*, a novel which still reads like a road map for the cross-country lifestyles of today's hippies.

"I don't know if you could call my music cowboy music," said Merle Haggard. "I don't sing about horses. I call it country music, or *American* music. It's one of the only musics that began with our nation." If Merle Haggard had never heard *(Continued on page 50)*

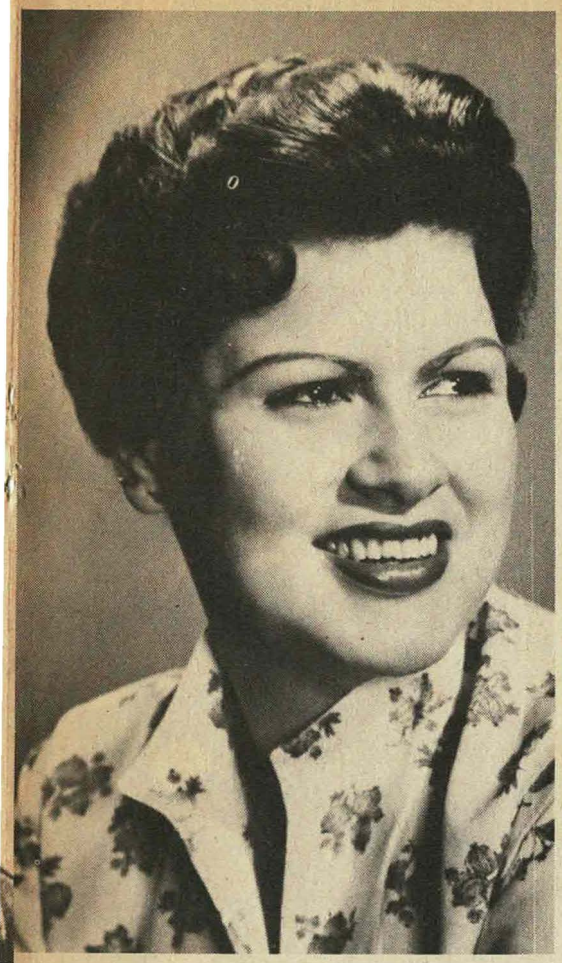
Above, Merle with his horse in Bakersfield; left, with friend Johnny Cash on a TV session..

Editor's Note: This article is from the forthcoming book, **Al Aronowitz's Greatest Hits**, to be published by Macmillin. It was originally written as a review of Merle Haggard's **Sing Me Back Home**, in 1968. We are grateful to Mr. Aronowitz and to his publisher for allowing us to bring you this insightful piece.

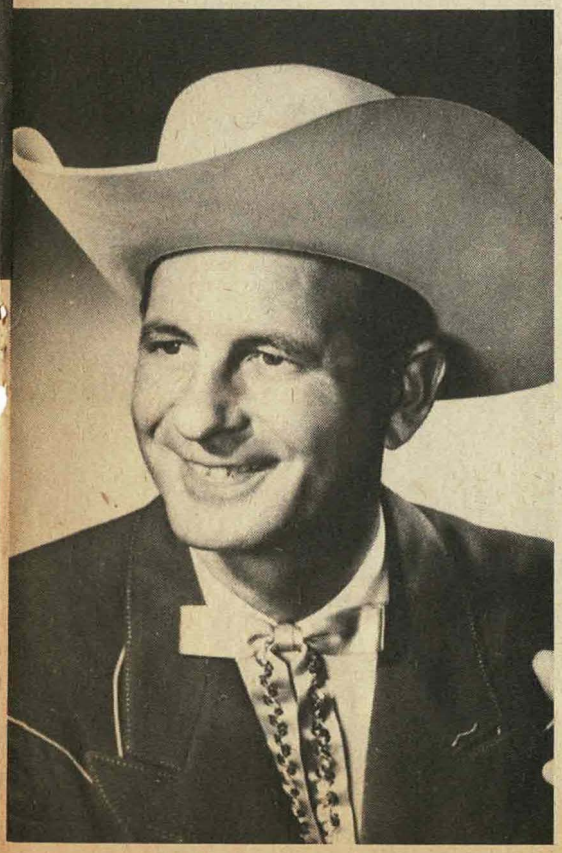
Johnny Horton was only 35 when he died in a two-car collision in 1960.

THE DOOM THAT HAUNTS COUNTRY'S GREATEST STARS

It was Horton's death that sent his best friend, Johnny Cash, into spin.



Patsy Cline and Cowboy Copas died together in a plane crash in 1963.



"I dreamed I was there, In Hilbilly Heaven, Oh what a beautiful sight,
"I met all the stars in Hillbilly Heaven Oh, what a star-studded night."

Those words were written in 1954 by Cowboy Copas, and it's likely that one of the stars he had in mind was the immortal Hank Williams, who had died, tragically, in 1953 after a long self-destructive bout with liquor, drugs, and the wrong kind of living. And perhaps he had the great Jimmie Rodgers in mind as well, the frail Singing Brakeman whose brief brilliant career had been cut off prematurely by his death from railroad tuberculosis in 1933.

But surely Cowboy Copas could have had no idea that he, himself, would soon be walking those heavenly streets in the company of so many other great stars of country music. Or couldn't he?

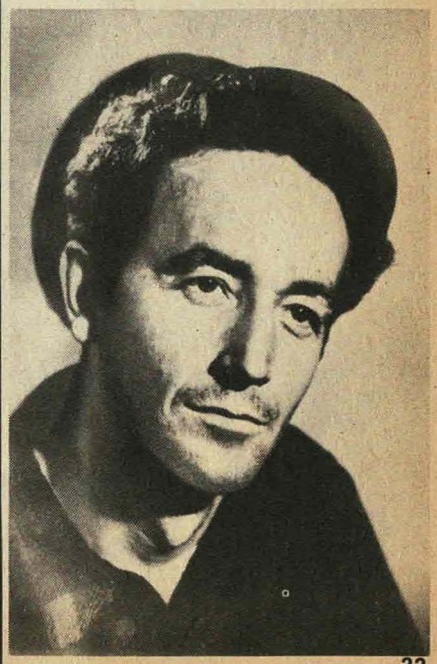
For over the years it has become apparent that the country music field has had more than its share of bad luck, violence, and premature death. The death curse of country music is something no one likes to talk about very much, but it is there. And each time the sad headlines announce the news that yet another of America's great country stars has met his fate, we are reminded of all the others who have gone before. The world becomes a little less bright with each one.

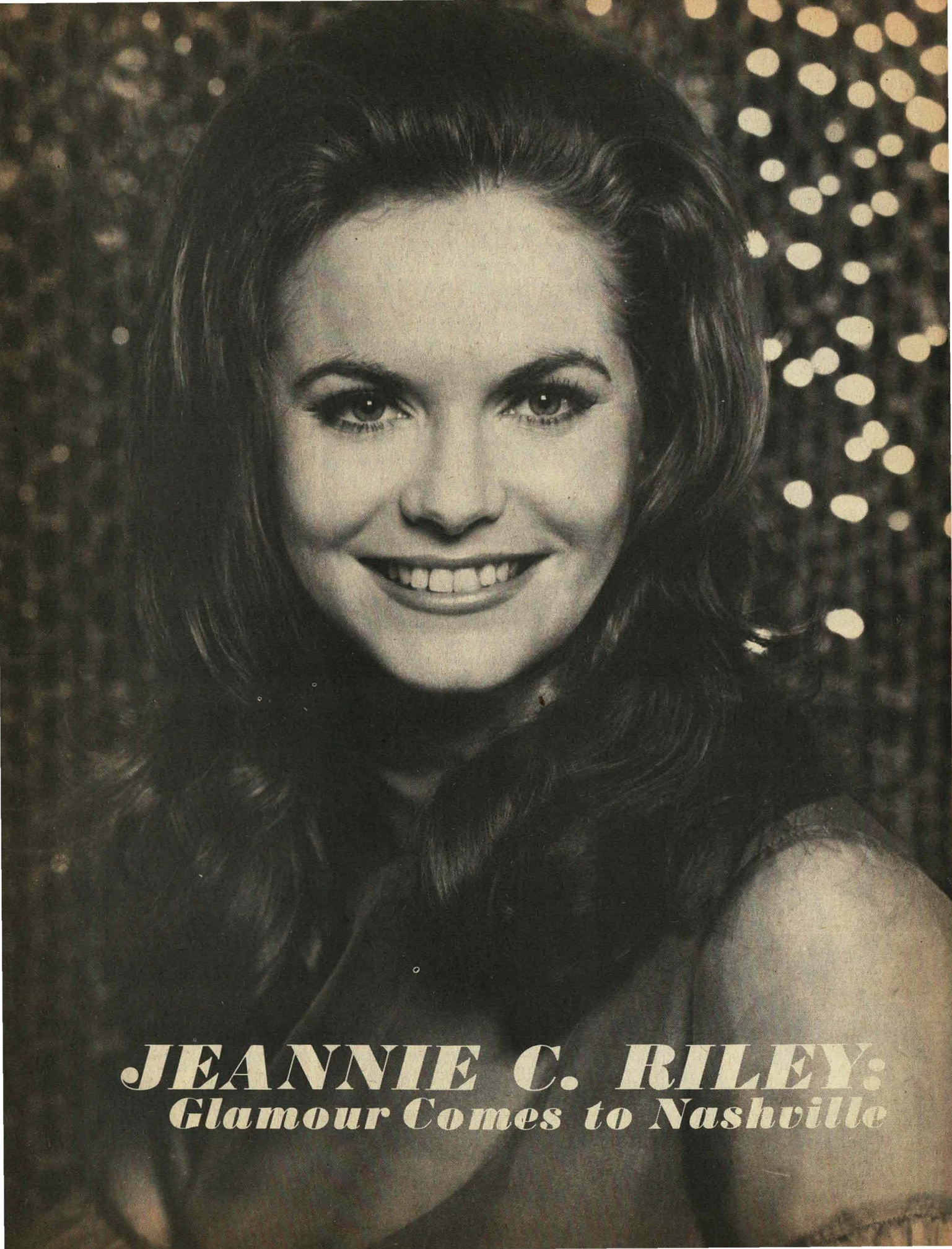
Cowboy Copas himself was killed in a tragic airplane crash in Tennessee in March, 1963. The accident took the lives of three other first-magnitude country stars in what was the worst single disaster in the country music field. In that doomed plane were Patsy Cline, one of the greatest ladies of the country field, Hawkshaw Hawkins, and Copas' son-in-law, Randy Hughes.

Just a few days later, Jack Anglin, of the Johnny and Jack duo, was killed in an auto accident *(Continued on page 62)*

This picture was taken in 1951, just two years before Hank Williams died.

Woody Guthrie, father of Arlo, met a long-expected death in Oct. 1967.

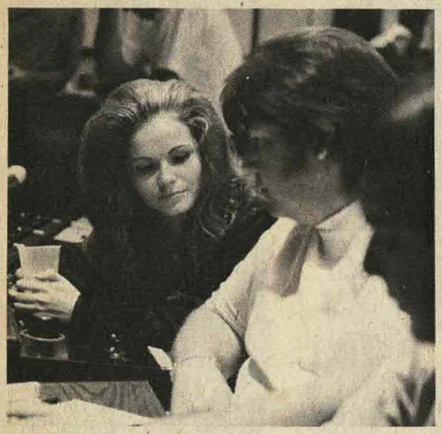




JEANNIE C. RILEY:
Glamour Comes to Nashville

Jeannie and producer Shelby Singleton were recipients of Tape Award.

Jeannie and Singleton during one of her frequent recording sessions . . .



Since she "dressed up" Nashville, it has changed. Girls follow her lead.

"I have to admit I haven't cooked anything since 'Harper Valley PTA' became a hit," Jeannie C. Riley confesses, lowering her head and looking up through a forest of eyelashes like a little girl who knows she's been naughty.

Which is something of a surprise, for Jeannie C. Riley exudes the kind of beauty and total femininity that makes it irrelevant whether she's ever scrambled an egg in her whole life. Somehow Jeannie never did come on like the quiet little housewife.

Ever since "Harper Valley PTA," Jeannie has personified a glamour that was new to Nashville. It's given the whole town a life, and Nashville girls have been letting their hair grow, walking more proudly, and shortening their skirts since Jeannie became a star.

There have been many charming and talented ladies on the country music scene over the years, but although they could sing circles around their city sisters, and whip up a batch of beaten biscuits between sets, none of them ever cared to compete on more sophisticated terms. Even in the late sixties, the women of country music tended toward the fashions and coiffures of the early Mamie Eisenhower era. And nobody seemed to mind.

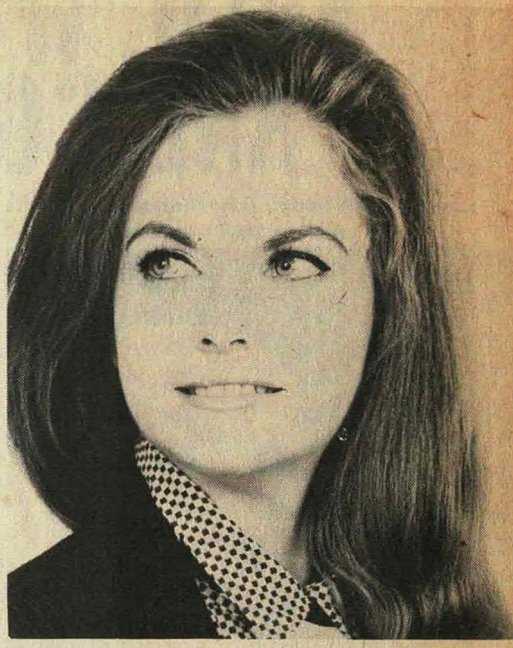
Then Jeannie, with her waist-length chestnut hair, her stunning figure, and her with-it wardrobe of minis and boots appeared on the scene, and since then, girl-watchers in Nashville have been having a fine old time. The glamour was always there, beneath the surface, but it took someone like Jeannie C. Riley to call it forth.

Of course, no one would have paid much attention if Jeannie weren't talented as well. In Nashville, everyone who is not a practicing country musician is a pretty good critic of country music. To earn their respect and attention, it is not enough to be good. You have to be great.

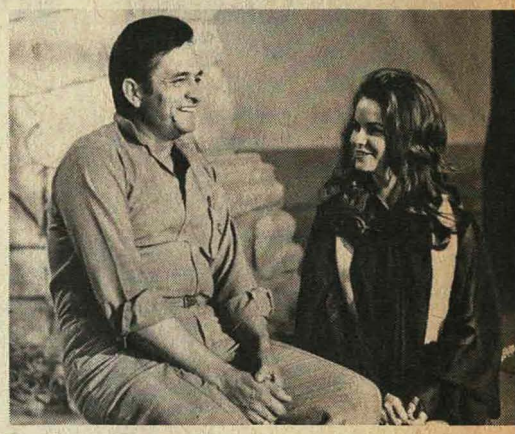
The first man to recognize

(Continued on page 38)

But for all her beauty and chic—Jeannie is still sweet and homey.



She gets along with all the country folks just as she always has & will.



She knows the latest dances and the styles, but remembers old ways too.

ARLO, WOODY AND COUNTRY MUSIC

Woody, the troubadour of Okemah, Oklahoma, brought existing themes, tunes and sometimes entire verses together to bring his own unique American body of music to country style.

Arlo went to fancy-smancy prep schools, unlike his self-educated father, but threw it all up to follow in his dad's footsteps, as best he could. He found fame before Woodie's death...

Woodrow Wilson Guthrie was born in Okemah, Oklahoma, in 1912. His body died tragically, inexorably, in 1966 but as he wrote himself of Tom Joad,

Wherever little children are hungry and cry,
Wherever people ain't free,
Wherever men are fightin' for their rights,
That's where I'm gonna be . . .

And so even though he suffered and died, as they said, in a New York hospital, Woody isn't really dead. His great spirit continues to walk the land he loved, in the words of his *(Continued on page 54)*

Pop's Debt
(Cont. from Page 6)

goes on to point out that it has "more drums and a lot crisper rhythm. A little more like rock, a harder sound than normal country."

Richie Furay, formerly a leading light in the Buffalo Springfield and now a member of Poco, says, "A guitar player we were talking to in Nashville said that he hadn't played what he thought was really good music for a long time. Everything has been so commercialized by the present administration."

Jon Corneal, drummer with Dillard-Clark & The Expedition, agrees. "The sound that the old folks at home will buy is gone," he says.

And Gram Parsons, of the Flying Burrito Brothers, feels that Nashville's greatest fault is what many critics and fans consider its greatest virtue. "Nashville is getting sterile because the same guys are doing all the records. No new guys in Nashville . . . they're using the same combinations and studio musicians over and over again."

The passionate young musicians are prone to put down Nashville, perhaps in order to upgrade their own efforts. But at the same time, all would happily acknowledge their debt to Nashville and the decades of musical heritage that Music City has passed on to the youth of today. Today's young musicians are quite possibly the most musically literate to come along. They have listened widely and wisely. They can talk knowingly of electronic music and of pre-baroque music; they can spot a Child ballad at thirty stanzas and they know the sidemen of Nashville, Memphis, and Muscle Shoals like their elders know the Jets backfield. And they know as they lift their voices out of the gut and the throat and push them through the upper vocal chambers that it's not Muddy and Chuck and Lightnin' they're following, but Jimmie and Hank and Buck.

The records of Poco, the Flying Burrito Brothers, the Dillard-Clark group and the new, country-oriented Byrds, have not, quite frankly, caught on within the heart of the country market. The youngsters would take it as a gratifying compliment if they began to show up on the country record charts. However, they have begun to serve the useful purpose of introducing country music to the great unaware mainstream music market. This market, largely urban, has, until now, tended to put down country music automatically, without doing it the justice of at least listening. By combining country elements within the familiar basic rock framework, like penicillin in a sugar-coated pill, the country-rock innovators have been able, to some extent, to awaken the mass market to the joys of the country idiom.

The thing has hardly caught on on any large scale. As Nat Freedland, of Entertainment World, summed it up, "There's so much talk around Hollywood about the new, heavy country rock sound, but I began to see that country rock is really something like a half-a-dozen groups and a couple of records. But it really has had a lot of impact, far beyond the size of the movement."

The albums in the field have sold about 70,000 each, which is respectable, but not terribly special. Someone once said that it's a musicians' thing—a style which the music-makers themselves really dig, but which the kids that make the market don't want to buy.

For one thing, there is so much of the "real" thing around, and it's so surpassingly good, that the potential country-rock fans have gone directly to the Nashville and Bakersfield product. It is rather as if, in 1964, the sales had gone to pure R&B artists like Otis Redding and Aretha Franklin, instead of passing through the intermediate Motown and British-blues-band phases.

For another thing, the very real anti-hippie, anti-sophisticated backlash that has turned some of the public toward the simpler, purer pleasures of country has turned them quite thoroughly off the under-thirty, urban bred variety of young musician. And the members of the new country-rock groups are definitely longhairs, and look suspiciously like the subversive types that used to play acid-rock. Gene Clark of the Expedition, formerly the driving force within the Byrds, recalls the time two years ago when he was arrested in front of the *Grand Ole Opry* by fuzz with loaded revolvers. Sneaky Pete of the Flying Burrito Brothers admits, "When we played in Colorado Springs we got a lot of people up tight!"

But whatever the success of the country-rock groups may have been to date—or what it may NOT have been—it is apparent to everyone with ears for today's sounds that the time is ripe for some kind of fusion. Some critics condemn country music as a dead-end art form in which artists become popular because they are able to repeat what's been done before. It's hard to break into the Nashville music establishment; the imprimatur of the *Grand Ole Opry* is necessary to the large-scale success of a country artist, and the tastes of the Opry are conservative. Experiment is not much encouraged which may be one of the secrets of its success. It might be possible to substitute a tape of an *Opry* show of thirty years ago some night this year without too many objections from the national audience, and there are probably some listeners who might not notice much difference between the two.

Yet a form of music that keeps on repeating itself is eventually going to lose its vitality. To an extent this has already happened in the field of bluegrass, where a band's excellence is measured by its similarity to Bill Monroe and the Bluegrass Boys. Some kind of change is a-gonna come. The country-rock groups sense the need and are groping towards filling it. None, as yet, have succeeded.

The lack of a forceful beat in country music must eventually be filled. The Bakersfield musicians, such as Buck Owens, Buckaroos and Merle Haggard's Strangers have begun to put more emphasis on the beat, as Chris Hillman pointed out. The introduction of drums liberates the bass player from the thumping, and, in some ears, monotonous time-keeping function. With the bass player free to play counter-point to the melody, the whole shape of the music becomes more interesting. This is one of the great differences between the early Beatles and the rock groups which were popular before they came on the scene.

We have seen the impact that soul music has had on reshaping the musical tastes of America during the sixties. American blues performers who journeyed to England planted creative seeds in the minds of young British musicians, who transformed the tired monotony of commercial rock and roll into something new and surprising. The British product turned American's attention toward the original blues and R&B that we had never fully appreciated before. And a new kind of music was born.

A parallel development is taking place today, with country music as the impetus. The impact of country on mainstream pop music is probably going to be even greater than the impact which soul music had. Right now, of course, there's just no predicting what our music will sound like five years from now. Or even next year. And the music scene is crying for a group to do for country music what the Beatles did for rock, so long ago. So far, that group has not yet emerged. But keep listening. They're coming. ■

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Undiscovered Country

(Cont. from Page 8)

couple of pleasant, moderately-successful recordings, singing in his clean, agreeable tenor, and playing his own craftsmanlike guitar. But Glen was not exactly a household word. The name sounded somewhat familiar to the average listener, and perhaps a few could place it accurately. But he was far from being a superstar.

And yet, paradoxically, Glen was earning a very handsome living from the record business. The shiny-faced lad from Delight, Arkansas, was one of the very best, and most sought-after guitar players in Los Angeles. His finger-picking sounded like intricately-carved crystal, and musicians put him reverently in a class with Chet Atkins and Doc Watson. Every producer and arranger in Hollywood knew Glen, and insisted on using him wherever a particularly elegant guitar was needed in a recording. His fame had spread among musicians and record company executives throughout the world. Glen was offered more work than he could handle, and his substantial income not only provided a good life for his wife and children, but also enabled him to help out his family back home. Glen was content, comfortable, he had an enviable reputation in his field, and a respectable sales record as an artist and interested in his work. What man could ask for more?

Then Glen recorded *Gentle On My Mind*, a song by John Hartford. It had a simple, hypnotically repetitious melody which sounded better and better the more you heard it. It had literate, even literary, lyrics, with the ring of truth and a directness of feeling. As with all his arrangements for Glen, DeLory leaned heavily toward the country sound, the twang of guitars and banjo echoing the mountain twang of Glen's own voice. But the combination of song, setting, and singer added up to more than the standard Nashville formula.

In listening to the tapes of the recording session, DeLory gradually came to the conclusion that this record would have appeal to more than the warm and loyal country music fans around the nation. John Hartford's lyric would have appeal to the intellectual and the romantic, as well as to the farmer and the truck driver. Potentially, this could be something special.

But to Glen, this seemed over-optimistic. Still a modest country musician at heart, he couldn't quite match DeLory's faith in the record.

"I want to issue this as a single," DeLory told Glen.

"A single," Glen exclaimed. "*Gentle On My Mind*? You're way off, Al. You know I only recorded that thing for the fun of it! I just did it because the session was getting tough and I needed something to relax with! And you want to issue it as a single? Al, I'm not even sure I want it to go on the album!"

"Glen, believe me, you may have done it for fun, but what came out is more than fun. It's a record!"

"Al, I still don't agree with you," said Glen, "But I'll go along with you. I know you'll never be satisfied till you've gone ahead and put out *Gentle* as a single, and then you'll see."

DeLory smiled and went ahead confidently with the release of the record. Within days of receiving it, most radio stations were playing it, and soon most listeners were humming to themselves, "It's knowing that your door is always open and your path is free to walk . . ." It earned a Gold Record swiftly, led the Grammy Awards, and made Glen Campbell the star that Al DeLory believed he could be.

And it was the opening crest on the tidal wave of country sound that has swept into the mainstream of American popular music over the past two years. Today, it is commonplace to say that country sounds are the sounds of the moment, in country, city, and suburbs alike. But there had to be a beginning, somewhere, for this large-scale re-awakening of interest in the home-made music of our country, and that beginning was Glen's first big record. The record which, at first, he hadn't wanted to release at all.

Country music fans have to be thankful that Al DeLory is a very persuasive producer. ■

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Glamour!

(Cont. from Page 35)

Jeannie's potential as a singer was Shelby Singleton, veteran record producer and president of SSS Productions in Nashville.

Jeannie, then 22, was a young housewife and sometime $50 a week secretary who occasionally cut a demo record around the Nashville studios. Up till the time Singleton discovered her, the biggest audience Jeannie had had was when she was a baton twirler in high school back in Anson, Texas.

Singleton had a song in mind, by renowned songwriter Tom T. Hall, and wanted Jeannie to record it for his new Plantation label. Jeannie wasn't sure she wanted to. She was happy leading her unpretentious life with her young auto mechanic husband and their baby, bouncing around Nashville in their beat-up car. She had never had any serious thoughts about becoming a full-time professional singer, and had no ambition to be anybody other than the person she was already.

Singleton is one of the most persuasive men in the music business, and eventually he convinced Jeannie to give it a try. He didn't tell her his inner conviction that Jeannie's combination of a clear, versatile voice, unusual beauty, and bouncy spirit would make her the first female superstar that Nashville ever had.

Singleton himself ran the recording sessions for "Harper Valley PTA" and coaxed an unforgettable performance from the reluctant, slightly nervous Jeannie. There was nothing new about the theme of the song—the sin and hypocrisy that lie just below the surface of a respectable middle-class community. The public was watching that sort of thing nightly on "Peyton Place." Nor was the tune, catchy though it was, particularly original. The power of the record came from two other sources. First, there was the thoroughly professional vocal by Jeannie. Guided by Singleton, she stretched her voice from a seductive purr to an innocent soprano to a nitty-gritty growl. In Nashville, there are any number of pretty girls who can sing. But there are not too many who know how to *use* their voices. Jeannie used hers to astonishing effect on "Harper Valley PTA," making the lyric a stinging put-down of a way of life.

The second factor that made the record the enormous smash it was, was the dynamic contrast between the subject matter and the manner of delivery. Here was a story of suburban sin and scandal, the life of "establishment" America laid bare. And it was delivered in the

unmistakable twang of the country. The effect was like a lecture from a stern but loving grandfather to an errant, sophisticated lad intent on making it big in the city. It was like the voice of conscience, reminding us of traditional values in a world tangled with materialism and immorality. Madison Avenue has been telling the rest of the country what to buy and how to live for years. "Harper Valley PTA" turned the tables, pointing out the secret sins of the hypocrites themselves. It was the voice of the country people, telling the suburbanites to get their own house in order.

The funny thing was that the suburbanites liked being told off just as much as the country people delighted in telling them. Though "Harper Valley PTA" is a country record, through and through, it scored almost immediately as a hit in the mainstream market. There was no waiting period between its release and the time that pop radio stations began to play it—the pop deejays didn't need to wait to see how it would perform on country stations. Radio station personnel called each other up to play "Harper Valley PTA" over the phone. "You've gotta *hear* this one, Ralph!"

The public, both city and country, was delighted, snapping up enough copies to earn Jeannie a coveted Gold Record award, adding another jewel to Shelby Singleton's crown of success, and making the ex-baton-twirler an overnight Cinderella superstar. Ministers around the country based sermons on the lessons of the song. And, most important, the pop market was at last awakened to the excitement of county music as a whole new world of listening.

Anson, Texas, declared a Jeannie C. Riley Day. Gov. John Connolly of Texas himself presented Jeannie with a Distinguished Citizen award, on behalf of the Lone Star State.

Perhaps the highlight of her career, from her own point of view, anyway, was Jeannie's debut at the famed Flamingo, in Las Vegas. That, of course, is a big step in the life of any performer—playing at Vegas is the sign that one has truly arrived, and at the Flamingo! Wow! But that wasn't what made the engagement so significant in Jeannie's eyes. What turned her on was the fact that Elvis Presley, who was also playing in Las Vegas at the same time, not only stopped by the Flamingo to catch Jeannie's act—he even came backstage and chatted with her for an hour or so! Just like any star-struck teenager, Jeannie spent the next few days in a happy trance.

And everywhere she went, fans were stunned not only by her talent and charm, but by the aura of glamour that

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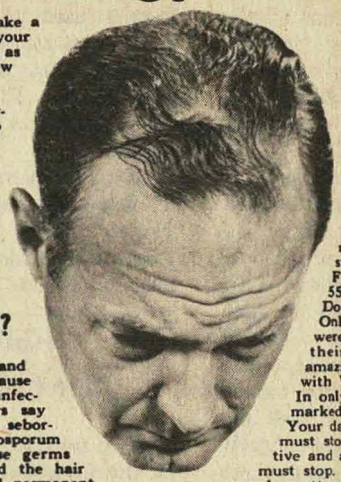

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surrounded her. To audiences that thought all girl singers in country music dressed only in fringed and sequinned cowgirl outfits, and clomped around in western riding boots, Jeannie came as an eye-catching surprise. She was not like those ladies who dressed like Cousin Minnie Pearl and *meant* it. Jeannie, obviously, enjoys being a girl and loves to dress as one. She can hold her own with the chic-est women of New York, London, and Hollywood.

And at the same time, there's a freshness and simplicity about Jeannie that is pure country, and which the cosmopolitan ladies of the cities could never acquire. She's appeared on the big television talk shows, around the dial, and has charmed audiences with her mixture of perky irreverence and childlike naivete, just as she has wowed them singing on *Kraft Music Hall* and *Hollywood Palace*. She remains largely unaffected by her fame, although these days she has a dressmaker and wears custom-made boots. She doesn't shop in discount department stores any more. But she has kept up with the baton twirling, simply because she likes it.

On her first trip to England—her first trip anywhere outside of the U.S.—Jeannie dutifully went through the round of interviews, television shows, and personal appearances, but she had only one thing on her mind. She wanted to get some free time to go look at Buckingham Palace. Buildings fascinate her, and even today, she collects photos of unusual or historical buildings she has encountered in her travels. In London, she stood across the street from the Palace and gawked like any tourist. "I'm sure I presented quite a sight, standing there bug-eyed with my mouth hanging open," Jeannie recounts, but you don't get the impression she's bothered about it. Jeannie is, quite simply, herself, and is not particularly concerned with what other people may think about her.

Well, they thought enough of her to put her on the *Ed Sullivan Show*, to pay her $60,000 for two weeks' work in Las Vegas, and to buy 7 million records and $250,000 worth of tapes. And now she's preparing to film a television series titled—you guessed it!—*Harper Valley PTA* which, if it's successful, will mean another major step ahead in her career.

It may also mean that Jeannie would have to leave her beloved Nashville, scene of her initial triumphs, and move to the west coast for good. If that happens, Jeannie knows that she can match the glittery ladies of Hollywood with her own brand of glamour, and beat them on their own ground.

Meanwhile, the female population of Nashville is blossoming. They have taken their cue from Jeannie and in less than a year have made the sidewalks of Nashville as fascinating as those in any of the fashion capitals of the world. Gone are the pink plastic curlers girls used to wear while shopping. More skirts reveal the knee than not, these days, and bright colors predominate where demure shirt-dresses used to hold sway. Jewelers report that earrings for pierced ears are finally catching on in Nashville; perfume sales are up. There are now almost as many boutiques as there are recording studios.

And a lot of credit has to go to Jeannie C. Riley, the girl who socked it to the Harper Valley PTA, and brought glamour to Nashville. The girl who looks every bit as good as she sounds. ■

Hall of Fame

(Cont. from Page 29)

fond of referring to him as "The Father of the Country Field." Jimmie himself would probably be embarrassed by such a pretentious title, for he was a modest man and knew that he had absorbed much from others. But the fact remains that with his unique combination of talents as singer, songwriter, guitarist and one of the all-time great country yodelers, Jimmie was a classic example of the right man at the right time.

He lived to be only 36, yet the most productive years of his life happily coincided with the birth of the commercial recording industry. As a result, he was able to reach and to influence many more men and women in his brief lifetime than any country performer up to that time. And, luckily for those of us who were born too late to ever hear him in person, there are many recordings of Rodgers' available to us today. Young country performers still listen carefully to Rodgers' classic sides, for an earful of the country sound "like it was."

In the minds of country music fans, Jimmie Rodgers is permanently associated with the railroads. His nickname, the denim engineers' clothes he liked to wear, and the titles of innumerable tunes link him to the great days of American railroading, before diesel trucks and jet planes took over. He was the son of Aaron Rodgers, a section foreman on the Mobile & Ohio Railroad. While still a teenager, Jimmie went to work on the M & O as an assistant to his father, and for 14 long hard, wonderful years he worked as flagman, baggageman, and, of course, as brakeman.

Those years had two enormous effects on Jimmie. First, he absorbed the whole range of railroad lore, the methods and the problems, the legends and the tall tales, the songs and the jokes and above all, the romance of the railroad. A whole chapter in American history is written in iron and steam, and the imagery of the trains and the tracks and the lonesome whistle at night runs constantly through American literature—from Delta Blues to Thomas Wolfe to the address in which Richard Nixon accepted the Republican nomination for the presidency in 1968. Jimmie's guise as "The Singing Brakeman" was more than a clever gimmick—it appealed directly to the special feeling that Americans, particularly country people, have always had for the railroads.

The second effect of those railroading years was tragic and eventually fatal. Always thin, a bit frail, and never really robust in health, Jimmie gamely stuck with the long hours and hard physical labor until his health was almost broken. He developed tuberculosis. Continuing as a railroad man was out of the question for a man in his condition. Yet Jimmie knew no other trade. He had to find some way to earn a living and finally hit on the idea of becoming a professional entertainer. He could sing the railroad songs he loved, and this would be a way of continuing, at least indirectly, his life-long love affair with railroading.

His first group included three musicians, with Jimmie himself as vocalist and guitarist. They were called the Jimmie Rodgers Entertainers, and they were booked over WWNC, Asheville, N.C. His songs of this period introduce themes which still dominate country music more than 30 years after his death.

For generations, there had been considerable influence, back and forth, between the mainstream of White southern music and the great watershed of the Negro blues. Jimmie Rodgers was profoundly blues-oriented and this may have had much to do with the power of his songs. He had listened with a keen ear to the work songs of the Negro railroad crews, and perhaps the keening blues melodies reminded him of the mournful whistle of the locomotives. At any rate, the songs that Jimmie wrote and sang are full of blues images, many of them borrowed or adapted from traditional Negro blues songs.

His numerous "Blue Yodels" make use of such images as, "I woke up one morning blues all 'round my bed," and

"I'd rather drink muddy water, sleep in a hollow log," and

"I'm goin' where the water drinks like cherry wine . . .

This Georgia water tastes like turpentine."

The constant inner conflict between unconquerable restlessness on the one hand, and lonely homesickness on the other recur again and again in Rodgers' lyrics. In "The Brakeman's Blues, he says cockily,

"Portland, Maine, is just the same as Sunny Tennessee,

Any old place I hang my hat is home sweet home to me,"

only to contradict it a dozen times in other songs.

Women, a favorite subject of songwriters ever since Eve got Adam thrown out of Eden, preoccupied Rodgers, too. He had ambivalent feelings about them, too. He was capable of writing in a highly sentimental way about the ideal woman in "Carolina Sunshine Girl," and then going on to write a scathing lyric like "High-Powered Mama:"

"I was a good man and you had a good home,

But you just couldn't leave other daddies alone

When I was a brakeman riding on the rails,

You had another daddy in the county jail."

Even writing powerful, down-to-earth lyrics like these, Jimmie Rodgers might well have passed an uneventful and unknown life if it had not been for a man from RCA named Ralph Peer. In those days, it was common for executives from the recording companies to travel through the south, listening to what the regional artists were singing and playing and recording them in their own territory. Ralph Peer had had considerable experience in what was then called the "race record" field, that is, recordings by and for Negroes, and had also developed a taste for White country music during his travels through the south. It was on one of his field recording trips that he heard of Jimmie Rodgers and persuaded him to record for RCA.

During his association with RCA, Rodgers made numerous recordings, many of which have been re-issued on modern LP's for today's record buyers. It's interesting that in many of them, orchestral backing was used. These recordings have a real value all their own, for they demonstrate that Rodgers had a natural musicianship that went far beyond the realm of country music. His affinity for blues led him to experiment with jazz in some of these recordings, a daring step that today's country musicians attempt only rarely.

But it was his country-styled sides, with no accompaniment save his own guitar, which account for Rodgers most important contributions. On the new RCA re-issues, the sound of these recordings is surprisingly good, a tribute to the skill with which Ralph Peer and his pioneer associates used the limited equipment of the day. The lyrics are intelligible and the quality of the vocals is utterly haunting. The high-pitched yodel, Rodgers' trademark, is used effectively again and again between

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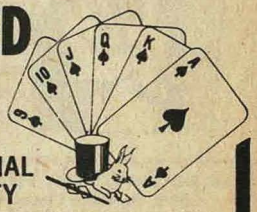

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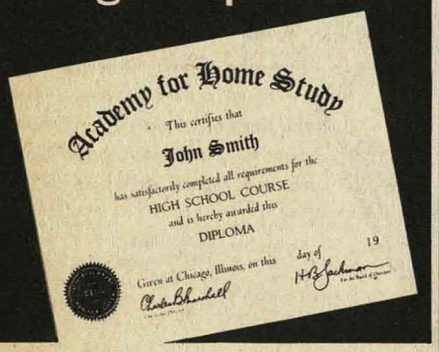

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phrases.

In 1933, in the final stages of tuberculosis and practically penniless, Rodgers came to New York to record. They were his last sessions. A severe attack of his disease rendered him practically helpless and, perhaps knowing that this was his last chance, Rodgers insisted on going through with the sessions. He sang, propped up on a cot, in the RCA studios on 24th Street, with a nurse in constant attendance. Just after completing the sessions, Jimmie Rodgers collapsed and died in a New York hotel room. He never saw his beloved Southland again.

Yet, if a man lives on in his work and in the hearts of those who carry it on, Jimmie Rodgers is still very much alive and with us today. His influence on American music, from Nashville to Newport to Broadway, is probably as great as that of any other American composer.

His widow, Mrs. Carrie Rodgers, sensed that her husband's tradition was being carried on in particular by Ernest Tubb. Eventually, she manifested her feeling that the Texas Troubadour was Rodgers' closest cultural heir by presenting him with her late husband's guitar. That instrument is today one of Ernest Tubb's most cherished possessions.

And the songs and the recordings of Jimmie Rodgers, in the same way, are one of the greatest treasures in the remarkable storehouse of country music in America. ■

Double Life

(Cont. from Page 10)

Chet Atkins is such a rare breed of man.

Most fans know Chet as the extraordinary guitarist, the "Galloping Guitar" of the 1950's, the man who taught the nation that country music can be as sensitive and moody as any other style. He was, for all practical purposes, the first of the great country instrumental soloists to reach a really large audience. In fact there are a lot of people who insist they can't stand country music at all, who are avid collectors of Chet Atkins' records. To them, Chet is something special.

Well, to RCA Chet is something pretty special, too, and it isn't just because he has several dozen current LP's in the RCA catalog, all of which have sold sufficiently well over the years to warrant their being kept in the list of available records. (No Chet Atkins record has ever been dropped from the RCA list since he first started recording for them!) He has sold a lot of records, which keeps RCA's top management contented, but he has made other contributions to the company which, to some executives, are even more important.

For eleven years, Chet was in complete charge of RCA's extensive Nashville operations, which meant taking care of a lot of RCA's business. All the recording activity of RCA's massive studios there came under his ultimate responsibility, and for much of it he was in the control himself. He was also deeply involved in the scouting out, signing, and development of new country talent for the label. As one of the most respected and admired musicians in Music City, Chet also maintained rapport with most of the professional musicians in town, and in Nashville, of course, that means just about every able-bodied adult. Through him, recording sessions were set up with just the right combination of back-up musicians for the artist in question. Scheduling and organizing these sessions also formed part of Atkins' function. In addition, it often fell to Chet to soothe ruffled feelings, straighten out misunderstandings, and keep RCA-Nashville the basically happy, open, relaxed operation it is. Atkins proved to be a master psychologist, negotiator, organizer, traffic manager, and all-around executive.

But in addition to this kind of business versatility, which would make him a valuable asset to the executive corps at any outfit from General Motors to the Pentagon, Chet had a special virtue which made him superbly suited to doing this kind of thing for RCA. He was renowned as one of the greatest guitarists the world has ever known. And musicians who are sometimes innately mistrustful of anybody from a record company front office would listen to Chet and cooperate gladly with RCA because, after all, Chet was a musician himself.

And, like most of the music people in Nashville, Chet would really rather sit down and pick guitar than do just about anything else. There is no way of telling just how many records Chet appears on, in addition to his own best-sellers, because Chet is in the habit of stepping out of the control room himself to join the session musicians, whenever the spirit moves him. It's no exaggeration to say that he's had a hand, personally, in the instrumental tracks of most of the great country hits that RCA has had over the past decade.

The most astonishing thing about Chet is the fact that he was able to combine his career as record company executive with his career as a top performing artist. He was even able, through some miracle of self-discipline and organization of his own time, to

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schedule about thirty concerts of his own around the country every year. It was nowhere near the number that booking agents and fans alike would have wanted, but it was still a very substantial schedule for any performer. And, of course, Chet also managed to sit down in the studio himself, with his chosen band of Nashville's top studio musicians, to cut an album on his own now and then.

It all began in June, 1924, when Chet was born in the quiet Clinch Mountains of Tennessee. Yes, the same Clinch Mountains where the renowned Stanley Brothers and innumerable other country and old-time music stars originated. He grew up with the sounds of country music mingled with the sounds of the farm and the forest; Jimmie Rodgers' blues yodels came through the horn of the old wind-up Victrola, and the neighbors came by regularly for some picking and singing with Chet's father, who taught piano and voice. Chet traded an old pistol for a guitar of his own, and took to the instrument like a duck to water. By the time he finished high school he was broadcasting from WNOX in Knoxville with Bill Carlisle, and with a group called the Dixieland Swingers. He later did shows with WLW in Cincinnati, WPTF in Raleigh, WRVA, Richmond, and KDA, Denver. Chet Atkins never considered any other career. Music was in his bones and his blood, and his lifelong love affair with the guitar was as completely fulfilling as any man's career can be.

He finally landed at WSM, in Nashville, the holy city of country music. While there, he made an electrical transcription of a tune called "Canned Heat," which found its way to Steve Sholes, the great Artists and Repertoire specialist for country music for RCA. Sholes instincts were so certain, and Chet's talent so apparent, that Scholes signed the young guitarist by mail for RCA. It was unprecedented, but neither RCA nor Atkins was taking much of a chance. They belonged together.

When RCA's Nashville recording complex was completed in 1957, Chet was chosen to pilot the operation. It was another unprecedented step for RCA; the whole idea of putting a musician, of all people, in charge of a complex and responsible huge and complicated enterprise like a recording center, was radical indeed. But Atkins made a success of it.

Not only did he guide the fortunes of RCA-Nashville with a skill that more than justified the company's confidence in him, he was also a vital influence on the growth of Nashville into Music City during the fifties and sixties. The record industry trade magazine, *Record World*, editorialized, "No one person can honestly receive credit for the phenomenal explosion of Nashville's music business. However, no individual has been more responsible for this growth than Chet Atkins."

We tend to think of Chet as primarily a country artist, but we should not overlook his virtuosity in other musical fields. He has played with noted symphony orchestras as guest soloist, and did a stint at the 1960 Newport Jazz Festival, which was recorded by RCA. And there was his rather unique collaboration with Arthur Fiedler and the Boston Pops Orchestra, recorded in Symphony Hall, Boston, for RCA's prestigious Red Seal label.

A man who knows the guitar as well as Chet does has the chance to make other contributions to the art, above and beyond performing and recording. He has himself taught many of the outstanding Nashville guitarists, men who have travelled to Nashville with the sole purpose of studying the guitar with Chet Atkins, and some of them have stayed on to enrich the community with their talents. Chet has also served as a consultant and designer of guitars for other professionals, and, in response to public demand, wrote a book. *The Chet Atkins Guitar Methods*.

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Chet is not a man to talk much, either about his art or about much else. He is not full of philosophy and theory just bursting to express itself in words. Even in a city where the best musicians are generally the most modest and self-effacing, Chet stands out as a particularly quiet man. He uses words simply, matter-of-factly, politely, but in a curiously impersonal way. Some people take this for shyness, others say he is aloof.

But the truth is probably that for Chet Atkins, words just aren't as important as they are to the rest of us. We need words to express our feelings, states of mind, insights, ideas, and other intangible things. Chet Atkins uses words to handle the plain business of communicating. For the rest, Chet has his guitar to speak for him, and it tells us, eloquently, of a sensitive, warm, and loving soul who cares most about sharing his music with the rest of the world. ■

WSM Opry

(Cont. from Page 27)

long every Saturday night for the chance of catching the show in person, and each week more are disappointed than not. But just being there is a kind of satisfaction in itself. Sometimes *Opry* performers oblige fans, who have missed the show, with additional numbers.

Within its first 15 years, the show that had been born with a single performer featured more than a hundred. Among the better known during that period were the Delmore Brothers, Ernest Tubb and his Texas Troubadours, 'Lasses White and Jamup and Honey, Pee Wee King and the Golden West Cowboys (with a sideman named Eddie Arnold), Bill Monroe and the Blue Grass Boys, Smiling Jack and the Missouri Mountaineers, and Roy Acuff.

It was during the 1940's that the *Opry* really proved its ability to make local musical heroes into bigtime stars. The emphasis switched from the group to the individual, and the new pattern of personality-plus-backup group gave their start to such legendary figures as Hank Williams, Ernest Tubb, Red Foley, and Cowboy Copas.

And during the years, the *Opry* has also treated its audiences to two of the greatest American comedians of all time, Cousin Minnie Pearl, "The Gossip of Grinders' Switch," and the tireless Grandpa Jones.

The astonishing thing about the *Opry*, which is one of the most influential forces in U.S. show business, is that since its birth, there has never been a written contract between the show and any of its performers. When you consider that it's the oldest continuously-running show in American radio, that's doubly significant. The pact is, quite simply a verbal agreement and a handshake. And in Nashville, a gentleman's word is still his bond.

There are a few requirements, and these are ironclad. An artist must appear on a specific number of Saturday nights within the year in order to use the prestigious *Grand Ole Opry* name. The use of the name in other circumstances is legally prohibited. On occasion, due to differences of opinion or the pressure of personal appearance obligations, artists have left the *Opry* fold. In some cases it has been a friendly parting, in others, there have been hard feelings.

Today, WSM's new station manager, Irving Waugh, and the *Opry's* new manager, E. W. ("Bud") Wendell, have carried on an extensive campaign to welcome back artists who, for one reason or another, had left the *Opry* fold. It was apparent that the seventies would be the biggest era of country music in history, and that now was the time to bring the family back together. Artists who are unable to appear regularly because of out-of-town obligations are welcomed as guest artists whenever the schedule permits. The result is a bigger, happier *Opry* cast than ever.

Waugh and Wendell have extended the activities and responsibilities of WSM and the *Opry* beyond radio, much to the delight of fans and performers alike. With Jack Stapp, of Tree Music Publishers, Waugh is credited with bringing about the first nationally televised *Country Music Association Awards Show*. Response to this show was so great that it proved to be the first step toward putting county music on the nation's television screens on a regular basis.

Most significant was the *Johnny Cash Show*, produced by Screen Gems for ABC and filmed on the hallowed stage of the *Grand Ole Opry*. Across the country, men and women who had never listened seriously to country music before suddenly found themselves completely addicted to the Nashville sound. The astronomical ratings the Cash show earned as a summer replacement guaranteed its return.

Other television shows in the great country music breakthrough included *Sun Country*, starring Hank Williams, Jr., *Hee Haw*, specials by Waylon Jennings, Tammy Wynette, and others.

Nashville insiders feel that within a few years—some think sooner—Nashville will rank with New York and Los Angeles as a television production center, and many feel that WSM and the *Opry* deserve at least part of the credit. If this comes about, it will

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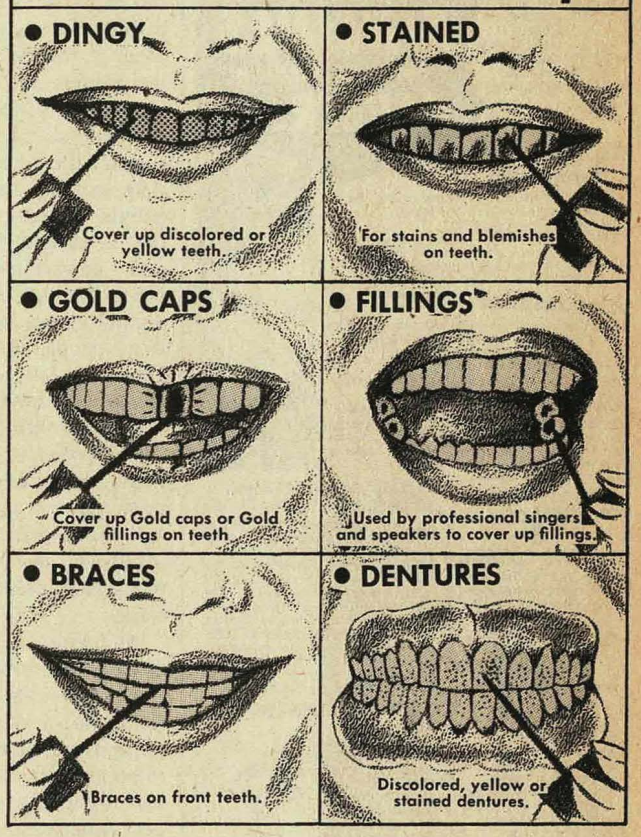

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be the second transformation that WSM and the *Opry* have been instrumental in creating in Nashville.

The first was its evolution into Music City, U.S.A. For during the 44 years that the *Opry* has been drawing musicians and songwriters to Nashville, enough of those talented people have stayed on to create one of the greatest pools of musical talent the world has ever known. Many of them never appear on the *Opry*, but instead find work as studio musicians in the numerous recording centers in the city. The town is full of music, with musicians practicing, trading licks, getting together with each other in the evening at someone's home just to pick and sing together. The result is a combination of top-notch professional musicians that can match or surpass the best that New York or Los Angeles has to offer, with a simple delight in making music and doing it well that is pure country in origin. Versatile and imaginative, the musicians of Nashville have drawn some of the biggest names in music to record in their city—people like Dylan, Como, Doris Day. The list is endless, and is full of artists who have never been particularly associated with country music.

Nashvilleans, and music industry decision-makers, are practically unanimous in giving the credit to WSM and the *Grand Ole Opry*. Without their influence, it's unlikely that Nashville would be the vibrant, prosperous city it is today.

And without the syndicated *Grand Ole Opry* show, now carried locally in more than 500 markets, from Alaska to Bermuda, 5 days a week, the lives of millions of country music fans would be missing something exciting and healthy, something that represents a bit of the best America has to offer. ■

Last Laugh

(Cont. from Page 23)

back on the air. It was the earliest replacement of a major show in television history.

It shouldn't have come as such a surprise to the network. If they'd bother to watch the record charts, they'd know that country music, which is the new driving force in the record industry, is appealing to a broader market than ever before. And *Hee-Haw*, produced in Nashville, features Buck Owens and an impressive new array of country music stars each week. If the network programmers had cast their eyes back over recent television history, they'd have seen that television versions of country humor have simultaneously enraged the critics and charmed the audiences. Shows like *The Beverly Hillibillies*, *Petticoat Junction*, *Green Acres*, and *Gomer Pyle* were not exactly duds on the rating scale.

However, the millions who tuned in each week to the summer version of *Hee-Haw* are not going to hold these little errors against CBS, which has at last seen the light and brought back their favorite program. The mighty Buck Owens, who hasn't issued a single since 1963 which did NOT reach the #1 spot on the country charts, co-hosts *Hee-Haw* along with personable Roy Clark, who plays just about every instrument known to man, and all of them superbly well, in a format quite similar to NBC's hugely successful *Laugh-In*.

As in *Laugh-In*, the co-hosts are aided and abetted by a crew of "regulars," which include both fresh-faced newcomers and well-established comedy artists. Pert Kathy Baker, a gifted mimic with hair the color of clover honey, is "Miss Hee-Haw." Other glamorous members of the show's official family are Jeannine Riley, an alumna of *Petticoat Junction*, Gunilla Hutton, and Diana Hutton. The much-loved Grandpa Jones, of the Grand Ole Opry, an aristocrat of the country music scene is perhaps the best-known banjo comedian in the nation. If he isn't, it has to be Stringbean, otherwise known as the Kentucky Wonder, who has only to walk onstage to bring forth belly laughs. Stringbean is a much respected authority on the old-timey banjo, having appeared at numerous folk festivals and university concerts, but he's never allowed his serious knowledge to interfere with his sense of humor.

As in the summer version of *Hee-Haw*, Junior Samples is going to fill a substantial role. The 300-pound "world's biggest liar" says, "All the Samples lie a little, but I'm the only one that ever got paid for it."

The cast includes two versatile writer-performers, Archie Campbell and Gordie Tapp. The multi-talented Campbell joined the Grand Ole Opry in 1958, and since then has scored again and again with both vocals and comedy monologues. His best friend, Chet Atkins, termed Archie "not only a humorist, but a humanist, in the most admirable sense." Gordie Tapp comes to *Hee-Haw* from Canada. The only reason the U. S. country music field is bigger than Canada's is that there are more people here. Gordie appears on *Hee-Haw* as his "other self," Cousin Clem.

In many ways, the new *Hee-Haw* is bigger and better than the original. The fast-paced, irreverent brand of country humor that endeared the show to its summer viewers is augmented by five times the amount of animated cartoon segments in the new edition of the show, and writer Bud Wingard has been added

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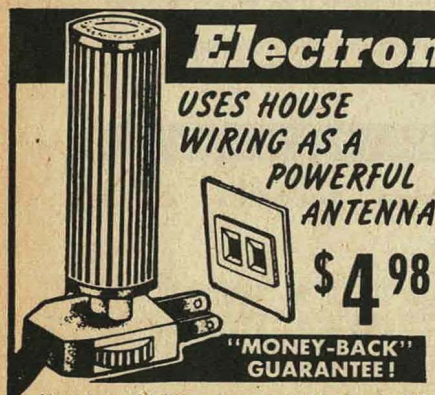

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to the staff, which also includes George Yanok.

The whole show was the brainchild of Frank Peppiatt and John Aylesworth, two audacious and savvy young producers. They sensed that the televiewing audience was ripe for a satiric comedy show in which country folks took a cool look at the rest of the nation. They brought their Yonge Street Productions to Nashville to do the filming, knowing, like record producers from all over the land, that if you want the real country feeling, you've got to go to Nashville.

The unparalleled pool of talent available in Nashville made it an easy matter to put a great number of first-magnitude stars on *Hee-Haw*. Consider the impact of having stars like The Beatles, Leonard Bernstein, Aretha Franklin and Herbie Mann appear on a summer replacement show. Well, stars of that calibre in the country field happily lent their luster to *Hee-Haw* and helped to make it big from the very first. "Cousin" Minnie Pearl, Jerry Lee Lewis, Sonny James, Waylon Jennings, Faron Young, George Jones and Tammy Wynette, Conway Twitty, and Loretta Lynn all paid visits to the show.

But this dazzling array of talent could not alone ensure the success of the show. After all, as even the network intellectuals and the sophisticated critics themselves know, there have been plenty of good shows on television that haven't made it. There are other factors involved in the triumph of *Hee-Haw*.

First, of course, there is that country flavor. The ascendancy of black rhythm-and-blues music over the past few years has turned the attention of the American people back to their own heritage, the roots of blues and traditional music from which our native American music springs. The grassroots relationship between "soul" music and country music made it inevitable that a nationwide appetite for country music would develop. To use a city term, country music is "in."

Second, there is the feeling abroad in the country that city ideas and city problems have been occupying our attention too long. Americans hanker after simpler days and country ways, and if they can't turn back the clock they can at least turn the television dial to *Hee-Haw*. Its 7:30 time slot in the summer insured that young children, as well as adults, could watch, and the wholesome country flavor of the show won the approval of parents. (In fact, Tammy Wynette was not permitted to sing her big hit, "D-I-V-O-R-C-E" on *Hee-Haw* because the word "H-E-L-L" appears in the lyric). In a time when TV fare seems to be getting too spicy even for adult palates, *Hee-Haw* has a blandness as

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refreshing as a home-baked custard pie. And if the pie ended up in somebody's face, he probably was only getting his just desserts!

In addition, *Hee-Haw* is a *happy* show. Its humor is broad, simple (some would say simple-minded) and easily understood. The viewer doesn't miss a gag because he's trying to figure out the one before. Country humor is not vicious; it's intended to make the audience laugh, not to wound the feelings of the person who's having fun poked at him. People who complain about violence on television should remember that there is violence of ideas, violence of intent and feeling, which is in its way more destructive than physical violence. There is neither on *Hee-Haw*. Egos may get deflated, but no bones are broken, and no hearts.

And among the performers, from Buck Owens and Roy Clark through the whole company, there is a bubbling delight in just being there together to do the show, which is somehow communicated to the viewer. It is about the same feeling as you get in almost any live concert by country artists. They have a graciousness and a humility that has more in common with the theatre of Shakespeare's day than with the arrogant pop rock music scene today.

Being asked back, so to speak, by their viewing audience, has only made the *Hee-Haw* bunch happier than ever to be there, and more eager than ever to please. They convey the feeling, so rare in television or in any entertainment medium today, that it's their privilege and their pleasure to have the chance to perform, and that your approval and response really means something to them. So often television performers, from newsmen to talk show hosts to actors on commercials, give you the feeling that it's their *right* to be on your screen because they know more, think faster, or look better than you. Obviously, such delusions have never entered the mind of anyone connected with *Hee-Haw*. They love their work, but they realize that if it weren't for the response of the viewing public, they wouldn't be doing it. ■

Singing Brakeman

(Cont. from Page 31)

a Woody Guthrie song, neither had much of the audience that attended the Woody Guthrie memorial concert at Carnegie Hall in January, 1967. They're reissuing Woody Guthrie's books in paperback now. Next year, they're going to make a movie about his life. His songs keep spreading like the Oklahoma dust out of which Merle Haggard was born. While the psychedelic magicians of pop music keep trying to blow minds with technological voodoo, America's next folk revival is calmly rehearsing under a shade tree. Boston may be proclaiming itself the new San Francisco, but put your ear to the ground and you'll hear the twang of Bakersfield, Calif.

Bakersfield is where the wind dropped Jim Haggard after the drought blew into Chacotah, Okla. All his friends and neighbors were migrating to Bakersfield. Jim Haggard was a country fiddler in Chacotah. In Bakersfield, he went to work for the Santa Fe. The year was 1935 and Merle was born two Aprils later, Jim Haggard's second son and third child. When Merle was 9, his father died, leaving little more than the echo of his music. Bakersfield is one of the most thoroughly modern cities in California now, rebuilt out of the splinters of a 1952 earthquake, but the Bakersfield in which Merle grew up might as well have been back in Oklahoma, with the settlers' shacks, the oil wells, the dirt farms, the cotton fields and the 10-gallon drawl of America's southwest. Merle drove a potato truck, hitchhiked to Texas, pitched hay on a farm, hopped freight cars to anywhere, worked as a shooter in the oil fields and drank like a man in Bakersfield's country music saloons.

"It helps a guy's outlook on life," he says, "to see how the other half lives, depending on what half you're living in." By the time he was 17, he had spent two years in a reform school. The whole story is in his music, a melodrama of hot buttered regret, deep dish sentimentality, and clear, cool cowboy soul. "I've done a lot of living," he says. He sings as if there isn't a mistake he hasn't made. The trinity of his sadness is whiskey, women, and the law. His church is righteousness. His laments are simple. "I'll leave the bottle on the bar," he sings. "I'll sober up and come back home to you."

As a kid, he kept running away, he says, because he didn't want to be a burden to his mother. Now his lyrics are about a branded man whose jail record trails after him like leg irons or about a condemned prisoner who asks to hear a song his mama sang before he's put to death. They're also full of home-fried humor. "Well, I'm gonna get me a seeing-eye dog to help me find my way," he sings. If Merle Haggard wears his scars as badges, it is not out of pride for the lack of virtue which caused them, but as a celebration of having survived the wounds. He can play the role of the hero, the fool, and the itinerant highway counterman. You look at his album cover and you see his name in his face.

Sing Me Back Home is Merle Haggard's sixth album, and if you really listen to any one of them, you'll really want to listen to the rest. The orchestration is as down home as Chacotah, ranging from a swing door piano to that buffalo of American instruments, the pedal steel guitar.

Merle's five-man group, the Strangers, are also from Bakersfield, which certainly has as much of a claim on Nashville as Boston has on San Francisco. Buck Owens, Mr. Number One of the Country & Western charts, comes from Bakersfield. So does Tommy Collins, who sometimes writes songs with Merle. So does Liz Anderson and Wynn Stewart and Ferlin Huskey and an entire honor roll of other Country & Western stars. And so does Bonnie Owens, who is the new Mrs. Merle Haggard. Bonnie sings the high harmonies with Merle. If you've never heard country harmony, it's like the rough-hewn logs of a cabin. Somehow, the voices fit together. Somehow, sadly they tell you they're going to endure.

The history of "pop" is written in the account books at the box office. You can trace it down the river to New Orleans. You can find its extract in the blue grass of Kentucky. You can claim it to be the illicit son of southern field-hand chants. But pop is an expression of the people, not the purists, and its lineage includes an imbreeding that ranges from Harry Richman to Elvis Presley, from Gilbert & Sullivan to Frank Sinatra, from Stephen Foster to George Gershwin, from Giacomo Puccini to Roy Acuff but pop is what the people buy.

Now comes Merle Haggard singing songs descended from his father with a voice that can sway an audience like a wheatfield in the wind. Even restricted to the Country & Western charts, he can sell close to 200,000 copies of a 45 r.p.m. Produced with a hint of Phil Spector in the control booth, *Sing Me Back Home*, the title song of this album, could be a Top 40 hit if the big city radio stations would only play it. The big cities could use the fresh air. ■

Love Story

(Cont. from Page 19)

those who knew Johnny Cash during his dark years, it is indeed a miracle.

Johnny's early struggles and hard times are almost incomprehensible to members of today's "affluent society." It's hard to imagine growing up, as he did, on a thin-soiled cotton farm in Dyess, Arkansas, where the family existed on the edge of starvation even though all four children pitched in and helped with man-sized farming chores. It was a good family, a loving country family that went regularly to church and read the Bible and sang the grand old hymns, and no doubt it was this strong sense of belonging together that kept Ray Cash and his family going. It certainly wasn't the subsistence level of life, the bad diet, the cold winters and the sweltering summers.

To young Johnny Cash, there was no choice. He had to get out of Dyess, had

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to try to make it on his own, in some other way. Otherwise, he knew the life would kill him as it did his beloved older brother.

So Johnny took the likeliest way for a young man in his position. He joined the Air Force, and was eventually dispatched to Germany. It was there he bought his first guitar and taught himself to play. From there he corresponded with Vivian Liberto, the lovely dark-eyed girl who had preoccupied his thoughts since he met her in San Antonio when he'd been stationed there.

After getting out of the Air Force, Johnny married Vivian and, thinking he might become a country music disc jockey, took her to Memphis where he enrolled in a broadcasting school. He knew life was going to be tough, that a baby was on the way and he'd have to earn a living somehow while going to school, but the thought of returning to cotton farming in Dyess never even crossed his mind.

Life in Memphis turned out to be even harder than he'd anticipated, though. There was just never enough money. He had a sort-of job as a door-to-door appliance salesman, but, as he admitted, "I was probably the worst one there ever was." He practiced his guitar, wrote a few songs, sang a little, and began pestering Sam Phillips of Sun Records for an audition. Phillips kept putting him off, and Johnny'd go home, write some more songs, and practice. Eventually, he convinced Phillips to at least listen, that though the Sun label was oriented strongly to rock and roll, with Elvis Presley and Jerry Lee Lewis as its principal stars, it would be worthwhile to consider some purely country material like Johnny was doing.

When he finally came up with a song that Phillips liked, Phillips said he'd record him if he'd bring in a back-up group. Well, Johnny had been working out with guitarist Luther Perkins and bassist Marshall Grant. But they had no instruments even remotely suitable for recording. The boys scraped together some money and bought Luther a Sears Roebuck guitar with a cheap amplifier, and a $25 bass for Marshall, and they were in business. At their first session, they recorded one song, "Hey Porter," but Phillips didn't like any of the songs Johnny had on hand for the flip side. He told Johnny to go home and write one, Johnny obligingly did so, and came up with "Cry, Cry, Cry."

That was in June, 1955, and since then, Johnny's professional career has gone up, up, up, without pause or interruption. There followed hit after hit, "Ballad of a Teenage Queen," "Don't Take Your Guns to Town," "Folsom Prison Blues," "I Walk The Line," "Guess Things Happen That Way," "Ring of Fire," and many others. Since then, Johnny has been a dominant force in the country music market and is one of the few country artists who have achieved large success in the mainstream pop market as well.

But if there was no stopping his career once it took off, there were serious problems in his personal life. He was on the road much of the time, following the hectic, erratic schedule of a country performer. Food, rest, and exercise fit into that schedule haphazardly at best, and there was never much time with his family. No way to solve domestic problems.

He moved his family to Casitas Springs, Calif., hoping things would get better, but they deteriorated, instead. His close friend, Johnny Horton, died tragically in 1960, and Johnny sank into depression. He had been a fairly heavy drinker, but now he switched to various "pep" pills. Vivian recalled, "I could tell the way he was acting was not normal, and I didn't think his rapid change of mood was caused by booze. Soon I began finding the pills in his recently worn clothes. We discussed it, but he had a way of convincing me that whatever he did was all right. I really didn't worry about it at the beginning."

But other people did worry. Johnny looked gaunt and burnt-out. He slept little, flared up angrily at the slightest provocation, and developed a tremor of the hands so severe that at times he couldn't finger his guitar. He missed a few performances. Not many, but until now he had been one of the most dependable and conscientious performers in his field. His few lapses showed up dramatically. Bookers hesitated before signing him. The time was ripe for him to break into television, but producers wouldn't touch him. Johnny simply stopped going home to Vivian and his children, and moved to Nashville, drawing more and more into himself. He was the subject of much head-shaking within the industry, and Vivian sadly undertook divorce proceedings.

But surprisingly, this time of professional crisis and personal agony was a highly creative period for Johnny. He continued to record, and continued to have hit records. He wrote for three and four-day stretches, not bothering to eat, sometimes. He began doing serious research for his songs, as the monumental *Ride This Train* album, a musical history of American railroading. It was during this time that Johnny's contributions to country music were recognized by the prestigious Newport Folk Festival, which invited him to perform in 1964. His performances there served as an opening wedge for him to enter the pop music market on a large

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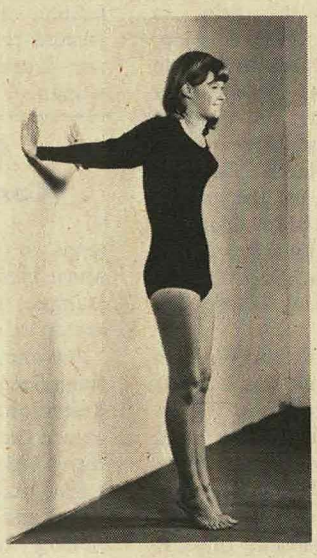

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scale a few years later. And, what was perhaps more important to Johnny personally, it was there that he met Bob Dylan and began another of his deep friendships with a fellow musician.

And it was also during this period that the casual professional friendship between Johnny Cash and June Carter began to ripen into something warmer and more personal. With her mother, Maybelle, and sister, Anita, June had been a member of the Carter family trio, doing studio back-up vocals and travelling with the Johnny Cash Show on the road. A successful performer since she was big enough to hold a guitar, June became a member of the Grand Ole Opry in 1948, while barely a teenager, and if there was any woman in the world who understood the pressures and tribulations of a country musician's life, it was June Carter. She saw Johnny at his best, and at his worst, and came to care enormously for the haunted genius who seemed bent on destroying himself.

She helped convince Johnny that he should seek professional help in overcoming not only his pill addiction, but the anxieties and conflicts that drove him to it. It wasn't easy. Johnny is a stern and stubborn man, not used to doing things just because other people tell him to. Other friends, business associates, colleagues in the music business, all had attempted to straighten him out. All had failed. But June Carter had a secret weapon that was bound to succeed where others had failed. She loved Johnny Cash.

Johnny began seeing Dr. Nat Winston of Nashville. Dr. Winston was a noted psychiatrist, head of the state department of mental health, and eminently qualified to help the tortured Johnny, but it was probably his thorough knowledge of country music and his longtime interest in Tennessee musical folklore that gained Johnny's confidence at first.

What passed in their doctor-patient relationship, neither June nor anyone else will ever know. She didn't pry. She just stood by her man and loved him while letting Dr. Winston's skill and Johnny's basic health and will power do their healing work. By 1967, Johnny had abandoned the pill habit completely.

Johnny Cash's comeback wasn't a professional one, because he had always had the self-discipline and determination to keep his personal problems from doing real damage to his career. His popularity with his fans had never suffered. But June had foreseen that the real peak of his career was ahead of him, once he had made his comeback as a human being. It happened at the Shrine Auditorium in Los Angeles, where a new and special magic took hold of the audience. Johnny had never sung so well in all his public appearances, and the sell-out audience kept bringing him back for half a dozen encores, rewarding him with a standing ovation of nearly ten minutes. Watching from the wings as Johnny took his final bow, June Carter wept the happiest tears of her life.

There followed the superb *Johnny Cash At Folsom Prison* album, released in June, 1968, which has sold close to two million copies, and the American mass music market in force rediscovered Johnny Cash. He played New York's Carnegie Hall, where New Jersey truckdrivers, East Village hippies, conservative Wall Streeters and tweedy professors sat side by side in a peaceful example of the way country music can bring the country together. He sold out the London Palladium and showed how country can take over the world. In less than two years more than four million Johnny Cash singles and albums have been sold, including his pop superhit, "A Boy Named Sue."

But Johnny's material success is just frosting on the cake. He has won the greatest prizes a man can win—mastery over himself, and the love of a good woman. ■

Arlo & Woody

(Cont. from Page 36)

songs, in the thousands of young people whose lifestyles have been shaped by his example, and in the person of his oldest son, Arlo.

Anyone who has heard Arlo's magnificently wacky song, "Alice's Restaurant" or seen the hit movie built around the song, knows that in the mind of this highly creative young man there's a deep vein of country humor, country music, and the clear-eyed country way of looking at things. Arlo inherited it, perhaps, from his father. And Woody had it because Woody was first, last, and always, one of the country people.

Okemah was an oil boom town, and the Guthries were, if not actually wealthy, at least as comfortably-fixed as any other family in town. But hard times and tragedy overtook them during the Dust-Bowl thirties, so that like thousands of other families they lost just about everything they had. Woody's sister was burned to death, horribly, while she was trying to heat some old-fashioned flatirons on a delapidated kerosene stove. The tragedy affected Woody deeply; under all the bubbling freshness and love of life in his songs there is an undercurrent of his sense of man's mortality.

Woody's mother suffered from a degenerative disease of the nervous system, Huntington's Chorea, from which she eventually died. But her death

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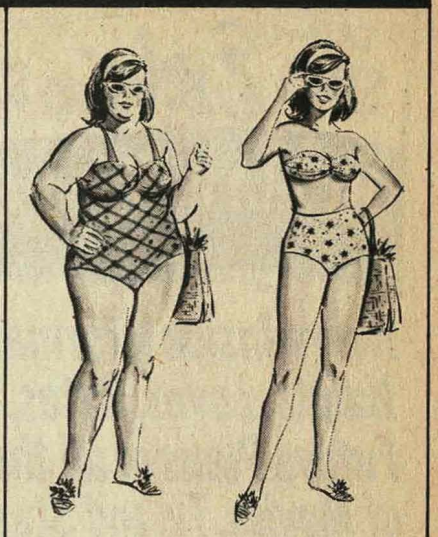

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was a long time in coming, and Woody had to watch the mother he loved slowly, day by day, dying before his eyes. At the time he suspected what has been proven to be true—that Huntington's Chorea is hereditary, and that he, too, would someday be its victim.

But there were more immediate problems back in those Dust Bowl days. There was the endless succession of mortgages, bad crops, the fading of the oil boom. The term "hard times" might as well have been invented for Oklahoma during that period. The people didn't have very much, but they had their religion and they had their music, and in a way that was almost enough. Woody's family sang together, like most of the families of the time and place. There were country dances and picking and singing sessions. Music ran in Woody's veins.

In 1935, along with thousands of other "Okies," Woody drifted to California. He made a skimpy living by singing in saloons, sometimes in little local radio stations that sprang up and folded within the same week. He sang at political rallies, union meetings, and gatherings of almost any sort. He began writing songs early; patching them together out of those verses that everybody knows, adding a line here and a stanza there, and finally coming to write his own songs, out of whole cloth.

He was "discovered" by Alan Lomax, son of John Lomax, who had recorded a vast treasury of traditional and old-time music in the American South. Alan Lomax knew instantly that in Woody he had found a folk genius, and he recorded the young Okie in a monumental series of recordings for the U.S. Library of Congress.

That larger-than-life collection of songs, stories, jokes, and conversation (Available in a multi-record set on Elektra) gives a good picture not only of the personal genius of Woody Guthrie, but of the whole collective creative power of American folk and country culture. Steeped in the traditions of ballads, fiddle tunes, old time music, and religious song, and educated via radio and phonograph in the newer traditions of Jimmie Rodgers and other early country artists, Woody was able to bring his own talents to bear on the storehouse of material he had grown up with.

He wrote, by conservative estimate, over 1000 songs. He put his rhymes to tunes that were usually some form or other of established folk melodies. Thus, for "Pastures of Plenty" he used the venerable tune, "Pretty Polly," in one of its innumerable versions. "Roll On, Columbia" used a slightly altered version of "Good-night, Irene." Such goings-on are a nightmare for business-minded people like publishers, who are

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likely to think in black-and-white terms. In their view, either a man wrote a song or he *didn't*. With Woody, as with many country songwriters from Jimmie Rodgers to Bob Dylan, it is hard to draw any hard-and-fast line. The point is that the songs got written and are there for the rest of us to pleasure in.

Restless and wild, he crossed and recrossed the country dozens of times, shipped out on a Merchant Marine hitch during the Second World War, got torpedoed a couple of times. He married three times and sired many children. One of them was Arlo. Woody's songs for his kids rank among the best children's songs ever written in any language. He not only loved kids, he knew how their minds worked, and while he was unable for most of his life to provide much more than the bare essentials of life for his families, he was able to make up for much of their privation through his contagious delight in just being alive and his knack for communicating through song.

By the time Woody was 40, he was already beginning to show signs of the hereditary Huntington's Chorea which had claimed his mother's life. He fought bravely against the symptoms, but they were inexorable. He persuaded his third wife, Marge, to divorce him so that she could remarry and build a new life for herself and their children. Then he resigned himself to the wasting years of hospitalization. His mind slowly grew confused, then his mental processes broke down entirely. He was no longer able to care for himself.

But while Woody was spending long years dying, his voice was being heard up and down the land. Some of his songs, beginning with "So Long, It's Been Good To Know You" became major hits. A trust fund was established to handle the proceeds from his songs and other writings, to provide for his children. Ironically, Woody, the man who had never been able to give much in the way of material things to his kids during his years of health and vigor, was able to provide a comfortable way of life for them when he was no longer able to work. Arlo and his sisters were sent to fine schools and never lacked for what they needed.

And by the hundreds, young men began following Woody's example of traveling the country, meeting people, listening to their music and writing new songs. There is hardly a member of the folk-establishment today who has not paid his dues in this way. Bob Dylan hitchhiked from Minnesota to New York in an attempt to meet his idol, Woody.

And Arlo, who had known his father only when he was a baby, eventually came to emulate him. Leaving the world of formal education, Arlo began traveling and writing songs, too. His run-in with the anti-litter forces and the U.S. Army led to the creation of an anthem for the youth of today, "Alice's Restaurant." If Woody was able to understand his son's success, which came just before the older Guthrie died, it must have meant a lot to him.

Today Arlo, who has gone on to play in the movie version of "Alice's Restaurant," is enjoying some of the fame and fortune that his father never knew. But, like Woody, Arlo remains in touch with the stream of country music that fed the whole folk and contemporary music scene. Just as at home in picking and strumming old-time music as he is on the college concert stage, Arlo is a bridge between the world of country music and the hip young world of pop. Just as his father was a bridge between the musical heritage of the Okies and the great heart of all the American people. ■

Honky-Tonk Angel

(Cont. from Page 21)

though there have been a succession of big Kitty Wells' hits since then. Decca knows a good thing, and signed Kitty to a rare "lifetime contract" in 1959. And Kitty seems content with her life and her career.

Born Muriel Deason in Nashville, Kitty, like most Nashville kids, was singing and picking the guitar by the time she was 15. Three years later, while singing on the radio with Bessie Choate, Kitty met Johnny Wright, of nearby Mt. Juliet. Johnny suggested that, for performing purposes, she should take the name of Kitty Wells from the Pickard family song, "I Could Marry Kitty Wells." And for matrimonial purposes, that she take the name of Wright. She did both, and ever since, her fans have known her as Kitty Wells, and Johnny Wright has known her as his wife.

Johnny recalls their meeting, back in 1935. "My sister, Bessie, told me one day, 'There's a pretty little girl who lives next door. She sings gospel songs and picks the guitar. I'm going to have her over so you can meet her.' Well," says Johnny, "She came over and she and I was introduced. She had brought her guitar along and we sang a few Carter family songs together, and then, about a month later, I was visiting my sister again and Muriel came over that time also. We got to singing together, and then one day I asked her for a date. I said, 'What about bringing your guitar, riding around, and going over to my home to meet my mother and father?"

That's the way they did things in Tennessee in those days. The slow

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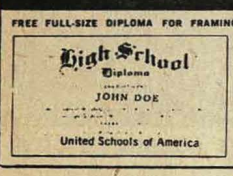

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country courtship continued for two years, with lots of riding, picking and singing, and family visiting back and forth, until the two were married in 1937 in Franklin, Ky. "We eloped," Johnny says with pride. "I was 23 years old and Kitty was 18."

At that time, Johnny was working in the David Cabinet Co., in Nashville, for 10 cents an hour. Kitty was working too, at the Washington Manufacturing Co. for $9 a week. Their first child, Ruby, was born in October, 1939.

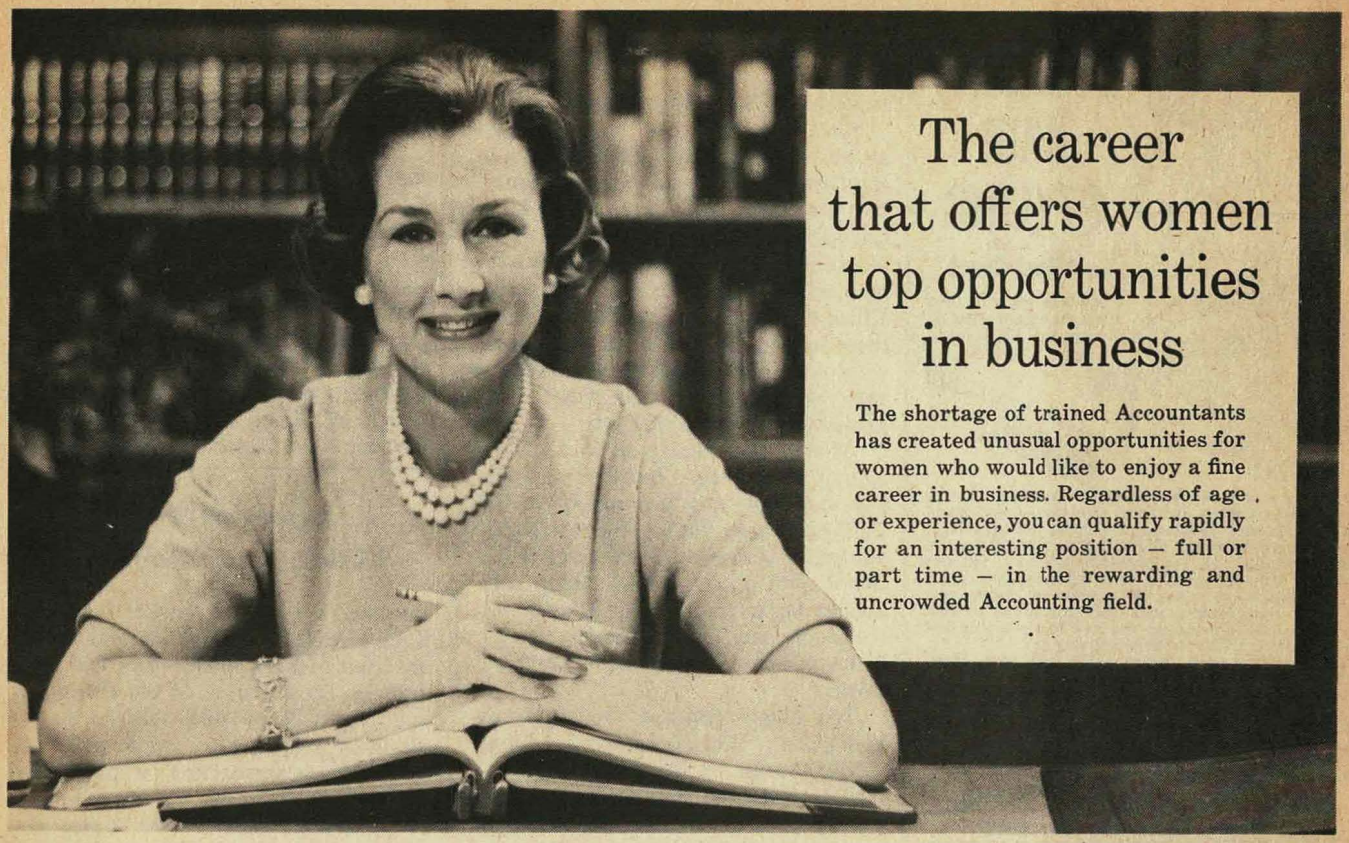
In addition to their gruelling, underpaid day jobs, Johnny and Kitty performed considerably on a number of radio stations throughout the South, among them WSIX in Nashville and the WNOX Midday Merry-Go-Round in Knoxville, Tenn. They were joined by singer-guitarist Jack Anglin. In 1947, the group went back to Nashville and played for about a year at the Grand Ole Opry, which was superb experience, great prestige, but not very rewarding financially. They "lost everything." Undaunted, they accepted work with the Louisiana Hayride show in Shreveport, and travelled south to make a fresh start.

Things happen slowly, sometimes, in country music. The Wrights weren't downhearted about their setbacks; they had gradually become professional, full-time musicians, and were firmly committed to their career. They were devoted, also, to Jack Anglin, the third member of their trio. Times were hard, and there were times when they were lucky to just break even. But they never considered abandoning their music and going back to regular, nine-to-five work.

By this time, the Wrights had two other children, Carol Sue and Bobby, in addition to the eldest, Ruby. (Bobby, grown-up and handsome now, is also a Decca artist and played the part of Willie Moss in the highly acclaimed McHale's Navy TV series on ABC-TV).

And then came the big break that made all those lean and hungry years worthwhile. "It Wasn't God Who Made Honky Tonk Angels," by J.D. Miller, was probably one of the best country songs ever penned. But it took the right woman to sing it—not a little girl, but a grown woman who knew about life and love and the ways that men and women treat each other. It had to be a woman who felt comfortable with her own womanhood, a woman wise and forgiving and, at the same time, strong. It had to be Kitty Wells.

Her return to Nashville was triumphant. The Opry welcomed her back, and she was named the "Queen of Country Music." The late Gov. Frank G. Clement of Tennessee praised her in an official testimonial: "Kitty Wells, in addition to her artistry, demonstrated



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that she is an outstanding wife and mother, in keeping with the finest traditions of Southern womanhood."

Since then, Kitty has reigned happily as the outstanding lady of country music. But there have been sad and tragic times, too. On March 7, 1963, the devoted and talented Jack Anglin was killed in an automobile accident while on his way to memorial services for the late Patsy Cline. Besides the loss of this old friend, there was another serious change to deal with. Johnny was left as a solo artist, a man who had performed most of his professional life with Jack.

"It was like starting all over for me again," Johnny says. But he rose to the challenge and, with the addition of Bill Phillips, Johnny put together the highly successful *Johnny Wright-Kitty Wells Show,* with all the family taking part. Johnny began recording on Decca, with the family backing him, racking up such hits as "Hello Vietnam" and "American Power."

The highly polished, exciting show also includes Russ Hicks, on steel guitar, Odell Martin on electric guitar, Leo Taylo on drums, and Wayne Manning on bass. They are one of the most sought-after and highly-paid personal appearance groups in the field. Their most recent accomplishment is the taping of a 26-part television series, which is currently on view in some 40 markets in the U.S. and Canada.

In April, 1969, Decca declared Kitty Wells Month, a belated salute to the star who had created so many best-selling records. It was an occasion for taking a long hard look at just what the quiet, gentle-faced Tennessee lady had done during her long association with the company. There were a total of 31 LP's, including three recorded with her family and the late Red Foley. And not even Decca was quite sure just how many singles Kitty Wells had made. But virtually all of them have made money, and a surprising majority have been big-league hits.

When you go down the list of Kitty Wells' hits, it sounds like a catalogue of the best of country music: "Making Believe," "Searching," "Jealousy," "Amigo's Guitar," "Unloved, Unwanted," "I'll Always Be Your Fraulein," "Paying For That Back Street Affair," "Release Me," "Crying Steel Guitar Waltz," "Dust On The Bible," "Heartbreak U.S.A.," "I Can't Stop Loving You," and literally dozens of others loved by millions.

But Kitty remains, as Gov. Clement summed it up, "an outstanding wife and mother," and when she has time to herself away from professional obligations, she returns to her first real love—cooking. She is quite possibly the only country superstar to have written and published a cookbook: *The Kitty Wells Cookbook,* published in 1964. Kitty is at work on a follow-up edition, to be published early in the year.

In her first book, Kitty wrote, "I'm the happiest when I can be in my kitchen. To me, the most fun in the world is to work for my family. I love to experiment with new and old recipies, and sometimes I am never satisfied. However, nothing delights me any more than for my family to enjoy my cooking!" Typically female, and typically Southern sentiments. And typical of Kitty Wells, the Queen of Country Music. Long may she reign! ■

Doomed Stars

(Cont. from Page 33)

enroute to a prayer service for Patsy. Jack's partner, Johnny Wright, is the husband of Kitty Wells. And that same month, Texas Ruby, of the Curly Fox and Texas Ruby duo, was burned to death in a fire in her trailer while her husband was performing on the stage of the Grand Ole Opry.

Of course, death, even tragic and violent death, was nothing new to the country music field. In 1948, Jack Guthrie and the legendary Vernon Dalhart had both died. Then, in 1952, the great Uncle Dave Macon, a mainstay of the Grand Ole Opry for so many years, died. He was an old man, whose life had been long and full, but though it was possible to accept his death with a philosophical mind, it was still a great loss. The same year, Rabon Delmore, of the Delmore Brothers, died.

In 1953, the great Hank Williams was found dead in his car enroute to a performance. The country music world was stunned. Hank had been a constant source of concern to his family and friends—it seemed that there was some demon in him that forced him to do exactly what would do him the least good. And dozens of the people who loved him had warned him that his self-destructive ways would one day catch up with him. Still, Williams was a particularly young man, considering the great amount of writing, performing, and living that he was able to cram into the years he walked this earth, and his premature loss was a shock to everyone.

Songwriter Fred Rose, one of the very greatest of the country songsmiths, died in 1954. Carson Robinson died in 1957. So did Jimmie Osborne of the Osborne Brothers. In 1958, country comedian Rod Brasfield, beloved by fans of the Grand Ole Opry, died. In 1959, it was Lazy Jim Day.

Ironically, it was the great demand for personal appearances by their favorite stars that led, indirectly, to the tragic

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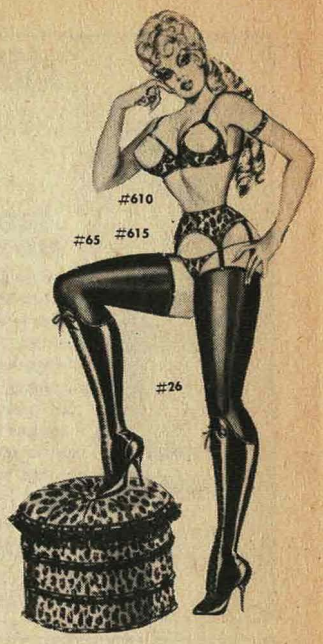

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and premature deaths of so many of them. Performers were forced to travel increasing distances, back and forth between dates, and the sheer numbers of them driving on dark and slippery highways was one factor in the apparent "curse." Those who were affluent enough to fly, instead, did not fare much better. The tiny private planes, the unreliable charter flight services, all contributed to the danger of being a country musician in pursuit of a career.

The chain of tragic accidents mounted with the death of Johnny Horton, who, at the age of 35, was killed in an automobile accident near Milano, Texas, on November 5, 1960. Horton was riding on the crest of his success with "The Battle of New Orleans," and had just finished recording the title song for the movie, *North To Alaska* Things couldn't have looked brighter for the personable young star when the tragedy claimed his life. With him in the car was his guitarist, Gerald Tomlinson, who shared Johnny's doom. Their manager, Tillman Franks, was severely injured, but eventually recovered.

The shock of Johnny Horton's death was a factor in the near-tragedy of Johnny Cash's life. Horton was Cash's best friend and the impact of his sudden loss set Cash on a long period of self-destructive behavior. Many feared that he would repeat the tragic fate of Hank Williams. Fortunately, Cash had inner resources that Williams, apparently, lacked, and was able to gain control of himself in time.

Two days after Horton's death, the legendary A. P. Carter died. Carter was the patriarch of the original Carter family, which did so much to shape the early development of country music. He died naturally, at an advanced age, but the proximity in time to the death of Horton struck everyone as another paradoxical link in the chain of tragedies that have plagued country music for so long.

In the same year, Ralph Peer, a non-performer who had nevertheless been one of the great shaping influences in the field of country music, died. Peer was one of the early field recording specialists who travelled through the south, recording country artists for RCA Victor. It was he who had discovered and first recorded Jimmie Rodgers and the Carter family, among many others.

In 1961, Carrie Rodgers, widow of Jimmie Rodgers, died, as did Karl Farr and Lew Childre, the Opry comedian who had been known as "That Boy From Alabam." Tex Owens died at the age of 70 in 1962, an old man who died peacefully. But in the same year, Lonnie Irving was cut off in his prime, with his record, "Pinball Machine" on the record charts when he died.

In 1963, the year in which Patsy Cline, Hawkshaw Hawkins, and Randy Hughes had died in their tragic airplane crash, and Jack Anglin was killed on his way to the prayer service for Patsy, still more country musicians lost their lives. Jim Denny, who developed the Jim Denny Artist Bureau in Nashville into one of the most respected in the nation, lost his fight with cancer and died in August at the age of 52. Don Owens died in an automobile accident. Sleepy McDaniel, who had played bass for Hank Snow for many years, died. Jack Newman, who had come from Canada to help Ralph Peer with his music publishing firm, also died.

The sad chain of tragedies continued in 1964, when Little Joe Carson was killed in an auto accident. Polly Johnson died at 24. Alton Delmore, of the Delmore Brothers, joined his brother Rabon in death.

Then another tragedy, unthinkable in its proportions, occurred. The great Jim Reeves was dead at 40. Returning from a business conference in Arkansas, he died when the private plane he was piloting crashed just a few minutes from its destination in Nashville. With him was his devoted pianist and road manager, Dean Manuel. Many of Reeves' great colleagues in country music joined in the sad search for the wrecked plane, which was downed in heavily wooded mountains. It was two days before the group, which included Chet Atkins, Eddy Arnold, Ernest Tubb, and Stonewall Jackson, found the wreckage. It was less than a mile from the home of Marty Robbins.

In 1967, the superb guitarist, Luther Perkins, died tragically in a fire. Luther had been Johnny Cash's back-up guitarist ever since the great star first started singing professionally in Memphis. For Cash, it was a doubly tragic blow for only seven years before, Johnny Horton, his best friend, had been killed. He had relied heavily on Luther's friendship ever since. But wisely turning his personal grief to humanitarian ends, Cash created a living memorial for Luther by establishing the Burn Research Center in the medical college at Vanderbilt University. Today, scientific research is carried on in Luther's name in hope of perhaps preventing tragic deaths like this.

While no one would come out and say that there is indeed anything so superstitious as a curse connecting all these tragedies, it is obvious to even the casual observer that the country music field has suffered much more than its share of death, violence, and tragedy. We all join prayerfully in the hope that the great stars in the country field who bring us so much pleasure today will be spared similar fates. ■

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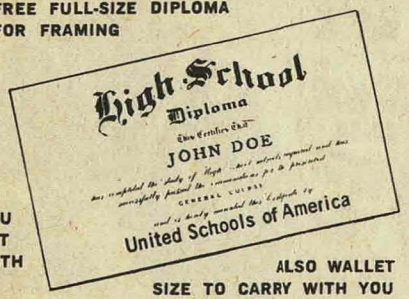

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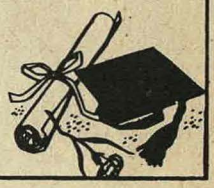

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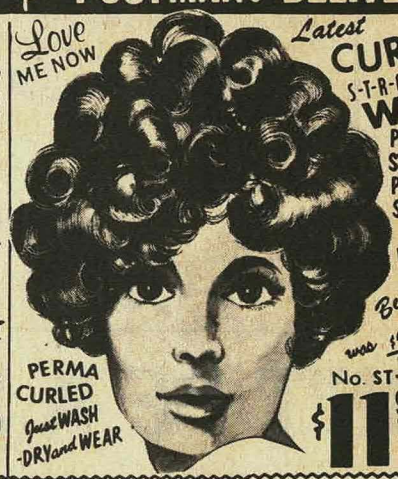

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- **Stenotype is a *machine* shorthand that uses only 22 symbols. It is not a pen-and-pencil system that forces you to memorize thousands of hooks, circles and special signs.**
- **Stenotype *types* an entire word at *one stroke*. Ordinary handwritten systems may require many strokes for a single word.**
- **Stenotype "takes" in plain English. This provides employers with a permanent, easily-transcribable record that is simple for any Stenotypist to refer to at any time in the future.**
- **Stenotype has no speed limit but the experience of its operator. Trained Stenotypists attain speeds of more than 200 words per minute. Complicated push-pencil systems can't compete.**
- **Stenotype is a small, compact, portable machine that is easy to take to courtrooms, conventions, or outside conferences at offices other than your own. This use of Stenotype — in a variety of unusual situations — is just another advantage the skilled Stenotypist has over ordinary shorthand secretaries.**

TODAY in thousands of executive offices, courtrooms, and convention halls, Stenotype is the synonym for highest speed and accuracy in the taking of notes, letters, speeches, testimony, interviews and debates.

With Stenotype, the modern machine shorthand, you can step up from routine office work into an exciting career where the pay is far above the average. You can qualify as executive secretary, legal stenographer, conference secretary, or one of many other high-level secretarial positions.

Stenotype machine notes are easier to take — easier to read — easier to transcribe than written notes. You never have "cold" notes, for you "take" in plain English letters that you can readily read back. Even if you've had difficulty mastering ordinary shorthand, you can become proficient in Stenotype in a short time. Then you won't be doing ordinary work—your services will always be in demand where the unusual secretary is needed.

You can learn Stenotype at home, without interference with your present job. The Stenotype machine itself is included in your course.

SEND FOR FREE BOOKLET

If you are serious about advancing your career and earning more money—if you are willing to devote a few spare hours a week to low cost home study—then you should investigate the many splendid opportunities that await you as a Stenotype specialist. Mail the coupon for free descriptive booklet. LaSalle, 417 South Dearborn, Chicago, Illinois 60605.

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